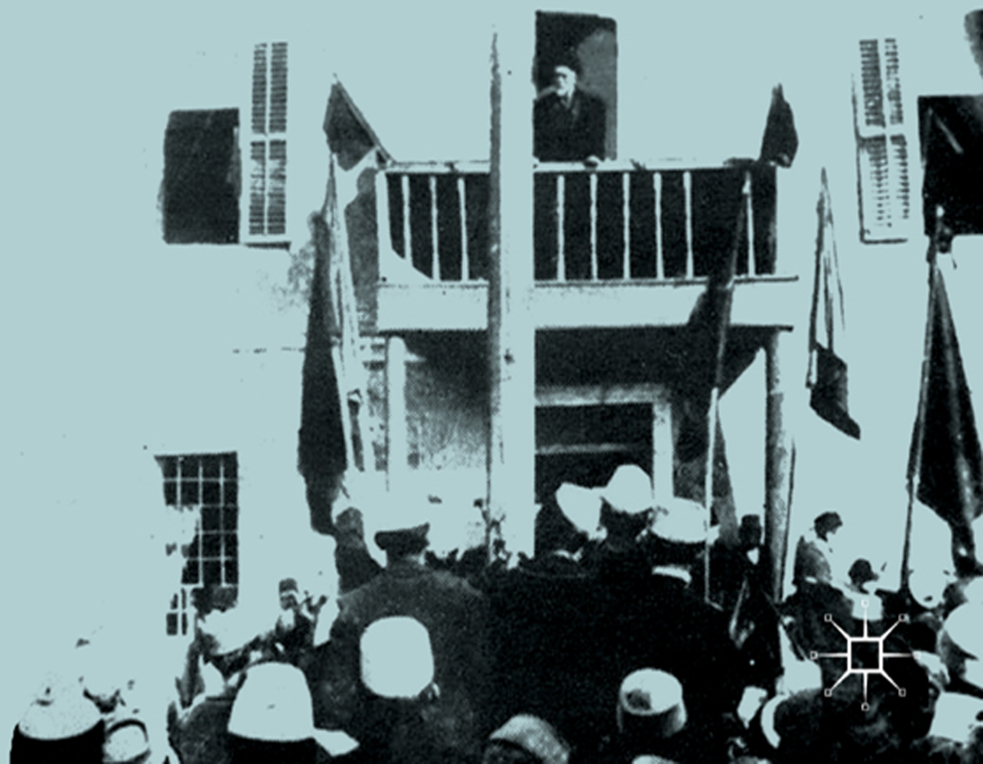
Reinstating the Ottomans

Alternative Balkan Modernities, 1800-1912

ISA BLUMI



Reinstating the Ottomans

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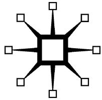

REINSTATING THE OTTOMANS
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First published in 2011 by
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN®
in the United States—a division of St. Martin's Press LLC,
175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

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ISBN: 978–0–230–11018–2

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Blumi, Isa, 1969–
Reinstating the Ottomans : alternative Balkan modernities, 1800–1912 / by Isa Blumi.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978–0–230–11018–2 (hardback : alk. paper)
1. Balkan Peninsula—Politics and government. 2. Balkan Peninsula—Social conditions. 3. Balkan Peninsula—Ethnic relations. 4. Balkan Peninsula—Historiography. 5. Social change—Balkan Peninsula—History. 6. Nationalism—Balkan Peninsula—History. 7. Imperialism—Social aspects—Balkan Peninsula—History. 8. Turkey—History—Ottoman Empire, 1288–1918. 9. Regionalism—Balkan Peninsula—History. 10. Educational change—Balkan Peninsula—History. I. Title.

DR38.2.B55 2011
949.6′038—dc22 2011000523

A catalogue record of the book is available from the British Library.

Design by Newgen Imaging Systems (P) Ltd., Chennai, India.

First edition: May 2011

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed in the United States of America.

To the persecuted burra who resisted modernist tyranny,
be it with their pens—Zef Pllumi, Arshi Pipa, Gjergj Fishta—or,
when needed, their pistols—Prenk Cali, Gjok Loka, Lek Daka

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Abbreviations

ACS	Archivio Centrale dello Stato
AHR	American Historical Review
AMAE	Archives Diplomatiques de Ministère des Affaires Étrangères
AiT	Ambasciata d'Italia in Turchia
AQSH	Arkivi Qendror Shtetëror
ASMAE	Archivio Storico del Ministero degli Affair e Esteri, Serie Affari Politici
ASMAI	Italian African Bureau
AUSSME	Archivio dell'Ufficio Storico dello Stato Maggiore dell'Escercito
BBA	Başbakanlı Osmanlı Arşivi
CP	Correspondence Politique
CSHM	Committee of the Shkodër Mountains
CSSAAME	*Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*
CUP	Committee of Union and Progress
CPU	Committee of Progress and Union
DDI	Documenti Diplomatici Italiani
DH.ID	Dahiliye Nezâreti Idare Kismi
DH.MUI	Dahiliye Nezâreti Muhâberat-ı Umumiye
DUIT	Dosya Usulu Iradeler Tasinifi
EEPS	East European Politics and Society
FO	Foreign Office of British Government
HAT	Hatt-ı Hümayun
HHStA	Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv
HR.MKT	Haricye Nezareti Mektubi Kalemi
HR.SYS	Haricye Nezareti Siyasi
IJMES	*International Journal of Middle East Studies*
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMRO	Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization
LON	League of Nations

MAE	Ministeri Affairs e Estare
MV	Meclis-i Vükelâ Mazbatakları
PA	Politisches Archiv
PR	Political Resident
PRO	Public Records Office at Kew Gardens
SAP	Serie Affari Politici
SNA	Swiss National Archives
TFR.1	Rumeli Müfettişliği Tasnifi
TFR.1.KV	Rumeli Müfettişliği Tasnifi Kosova
TFR.1.ŞKT	Rumeli Müfettişliği Tasnifi Arzuhaller
Y.MTV	Yıldız Tasnifi: Mütenevvi Mâruzât Evrakı
YA.HUS	Yıldız Tasnifi: Sadâret Hususî Mâruzât Evrakı
Y.PRK.MŞ	Yıldız Perakende Evrakı Meşihat Maruzatı
Y.PRK.MYD	Yıldız Perakende Evrakı Yaveran ve Maiyyet-ı Seniyye Erkan-ı Harbiye Dairesi
Y.PRK.UM	Yıldız Perakende Evrakı, Umum Vilayetler Tahriratı
YA.RES	Sadâret Resmi Mâruzât Evrakı
YEE	Yildiz Esas Evrak

Preface and Acknowledgments

> Nuk ndërtohet shtëpia prej kulmit. (You cannot build a house by starting with the roof.)

In a typical nation's story, the hero stands alone. Bold and assertive, his (invariably it is a man) singular act is to serve the nation, an unquestioned monolith whose place in history can never be retroactively doubted. In the case of the Balkans, a concoction of disparate regions and peoples, hero worship has become the stuff of academic legend.

Among the more prone to celebrate the hero are those who have learned to call themselves Albanians. Their story is especially emblematic of the lengths some will go to hoodwink peoples they expect to rule. Vulnerable to any number of manipulations, people who already concede the historical "fact" that they do share a common past have allowed their figurative "national home" to literally be built from the present backwards. I believe one photo alone best highlights the vicarious existence of such a "national" story.

There stands, on the cover of this book, the solitary act of nationalist heroism. At least as framed by a regime whose very existence, some 50 years after the event in the photo took place, rested on its ability to impose its present on everyone else's pasts. Juxtaposed to the image the regime of Enver Hoxha (1944–1985) wished to convey as the Albanian nationalist moment is the actual moment captured as a photograph on November 28, 1912 (figure 5.1). This was a day, as far as the dictator's regime was concerned, that could serve its foundational purposes only if the very context is literally airbrushed away. While Enver Hoxha's regime was keen on airbrushing out an entire political class from Albania's history, most of which ended up literally excised from national memory in the form of anticlerical vitriol, self-anointed "historians" have equally shunned any reference to an Ottoman heritage clearly evident in the photo.

Reinstating the Ottomans aims to return the people a brutal dictator erased from memory back into focus. In this book, the

quintessential national hero of Albanian Socialist historiography—Ismail Qemali *Bey* of Vlora—will no longer stand alone on the balcony of a "modern" history with only the finger tips of his comrades left to share the glory. Qemali will share the western Balkans' collective past with many others, all of whom, I argue, shared a common bond as Ottomans first.

I am writing this book at a time when our often tragic recent histories, for those of us from the Balkans, Central Africa, the Middle East, and so on, are being rewritten in front of our very eyes. This time, the airbrushing is enforced by "conflict-resolution" experts secunded by the European Union or United Nations, who eagerly pay sociologists to cure our "ancient hatreds." In face of yet another round of bold-faced manipulation of "our" varied histories, we cannot be victims, as we in the Third World are all complicit in perpetuating "ancient hatreds."

I will speak especially about the kind of characters Albanians call *burrë/burra* (pl.). I believe that such a term, reflective of the honor that is instilled in those brave, sturdy giants of rural communities—*trimë* is another term used in some parts of the Albanian-speaking world—best characterizes those in the region's history who never allowed their "people" to become the sacrificial lambs of "higher powers." These *burra* diligently served as guardians of their community's dignity; the nature of their sacrifice became the source of local legend and constantly filled the pages of consular reports that can still be found in European archives.

Alas, these are the same *burra* who were most likely airbrushed out of history in the twentieth century. Symbols of a community's ability to resist the ambitions of outsiders to take what was not theirs, the Prek Cali's of this earlier world would never be allowed to inform the story of a different order, one that emerged by the end of 1912 at the expense of an older reality. Instead of those who would continue to defend the thousands of self-sufficient communities still in existence well into the twentieth century, we have been left with doctored photos and a house built on what was vilified, defiled, or simply ignored. Today, we have the sugarcoated stories of the likes of Ismail Qemali, a generic and entirely contrived "national hero," sitting alone on the "nation's" balcony, denying us any other possible history.

This book of questioning the predominant methods of reading and telling the past is very much also a book about the future. The spirit of mutual empathy and the celebration of "differences" that highlight opportunities rather than stimulate fear intermingle in this rewritten premodern story of the Balkans. I adopt this mantra because there is something distinctly modern about the violence of,

first, the twentieth and, now, the twenty-first century. The "ethnic cleansing" that first targeted the weak and terrorized the collective seems entirely a modern phenomenon, one that all but airbrushes out of memory a more complex, mediated, and diverse Ottoman experience. I would like that complex set of earlier Ottoman experiences to once again say something about us, perhaps inspiring an awakening that once again feels that it is possible to act like *burra*. I believe that this is crucial for I wrote this book in the context of an entirely different fraud, the so-called war on terror, that has conjured distortions of our pasts, presents, and futures in ways that put the Hoxha regime to shame. The Ottoman story, if saved from our worst instincts, can remind us that there was once a different way for human beings of "different" faiths to engage the world around them.

In the process of living this book, I had the fortune to share the process with some exceptional people. First and foremost, my wife, Dardane Arifaj. I can only hope that some sense of accomplishment from this book's completion compensates for all the time that it has taken from us. If there is recompense, perhaps it is the knowledge that it is because of the research that informs much of the book's arguments that we even had the chance to meet in the first place. Te dua Daki.

I extend this love and thanks to my mother who made it possible for me after so many years of financial hardship to still be an independent young man. Without the world she created for me, I would have never had the wherewithal to take the risks that I did. In this same spirit, I broaden my love and thanks to my Kosovar family, whose open-hearted acceptance of who I am only reminds me of what I think was going on in Kosova for much of its history. Special thanks goes to Ardi for his energy and Visar for helping with the images and maps, a nearly thankless task only made more difficult by my failure to understand technically how he does it.

The research conducted to make this book's central claim started many years ago as a fascination with the dynamics of modern identity-formation. My skepticism with the notion that there is something "essential" about who we are took me from New York to Istanbul and many places in between. My years as a student at the New School for Social Research undoubtedly shaped most of this long-term quest. In this regard, it was an honor to have had the opportunity to work with extraordinary mentors—Aldo Lauria-Santiago, Talal Asad, Eric Hobsbawn, Ferenc Fehér, Aristide Zolberg, and Charles Tilly—while engaging the equally remarkable group of students these luminaries attracted to New York.

My nine years of affiliation with New York University produced another set of crucial axis of exchange that I trust have found its way in this book. In particular, Zachary Lockman bears much responsibility for my relative successes; I can only hint at what his kindness, generosity, and professionalism has done to set a standard I can only hope to replicate.

Research over the years in Istanbul was made possible by the contributions of so many. A special place remains for Ebru Sönmez who gave me so much. She will undoubtedly see her impact on this book immediately. There are many others who deserve special thanks for being a part of my life as I researched and wrote this book: John Curry, Aras Gaylani, Thomas Kühn, Ryan Gingeras, Ayten Ardel, Nicole van Os, Jens Hanssen, Sabri Ateş, Carole Woodall, Frederick Cooper, Ruth Ben Ghiat, John Drabble, Maurus Reinkowski, Stefan Weber, Sinan Kuneralp, Andras Riedlmayer, John Chalcraft, Rifat Abou El-Haj, Stacy McGoldrick, Gail Kligman, Béatrice Hibou, Jean-François Bayart, and Florian Bieber stand out. For Edith and Josef in Vienna, Greg and Sasha in London, Ussama in Beirut, Ahmed in Cairo, Francesco in Rome, Bettina and Ka in Bern, Andrea in Paris, and Shawn in Washington, your hospitality and generosity helped me access the otherwise inaccessible documents. And those friends who go even further back, especially Steven Hyland and Michael Hamson, you do not realize how much I am grateful for you being in my life.

Colleagues and students at the American University of Sharjah and Georgia State University where I have taught during the writing of some of this book contributed greatly to both the delay in its completion and its inevitable improvements. I keep a special place for Joe Perry, Neema Noori, Bassel Salloukh, Richard Gassan, and Robert Baker for their friendship, great evening conversations, and availability for just about anything but reading the book. Thanks for nothing guys!

Müsemma Sabancioğlu helped a great deal with finalizing the little details of technically putting this last version together. Casey Cater was most gracious with a last minute call. My new colleagues at the Centre for Area Studies in Leipzig also contributed to the finalizing of this book. I reserve my greatest appreciation, however, for Jon Schmitt. Once again this diamond in the rough proved to be my most important ally. The only colleague, nay friend, willing to engage with an open mind this very difficult book. I can only hope that this contribution will one day make for interesting trivia as his name is evoked far and wide in the halls of academia. The fact that this potentially brilliant scholar was once a "student" of mine makes me very humble (and grateful) indeed. Thanks buddy.

Of course, Chris Chappell and his able team at Palgrave-Macmillan, whose interest rescued this book, deserve much praise. I especially thank Sarah Whalen for remaining patient as I tried to put this book together while in Manila. I also thank the readers of the early drafts of my manuscript for their helpful comments and demands for greater vigor as well as the personal interest in this project. In this regard, a special thanks must be extended to Noel Malcolm and Robert Norton whose remarkable patience and careful reading rescued me from a contentedness and complacency that was not warranted. I consider myself most fortunate to have had this book's early revisions in their hands.

I acknowledge the professionals who helped facilitate my extensive research throughout Europe/Middle East. In particular, I thank the staff at the Arkivi Qendror Shtetëror, Haus, Hauf und Staatsarchiv, Centres des Archives diplomatiques de Nantes, Archivio Storico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri, Bundesarchiv (Bern), the Başbakanlık Arşivi, the Public Records Office at Kew Gardens, the League of Nations Library in Geneva, the National Archives in Maryland, and finally the Atatürk Library in Istanbul.

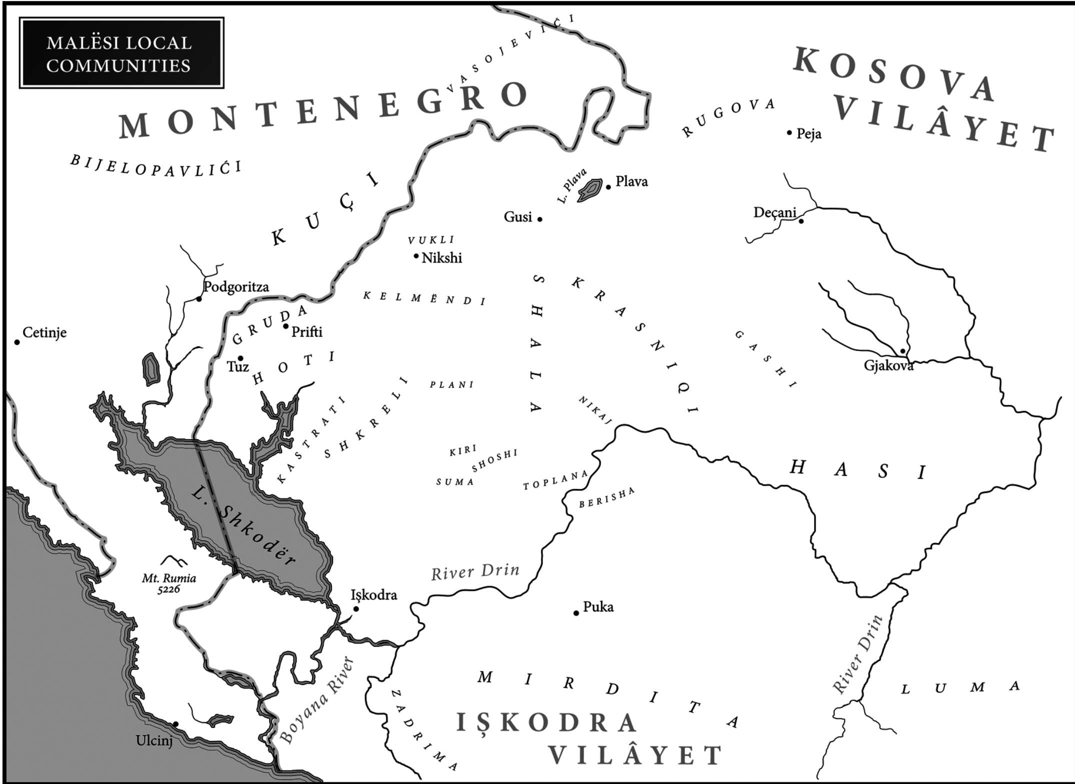
Special acknowledgment must be given to the organizations and institutes that have provided generous funding to help research and write this book: The Fulbright-Hayes Committee, the American Council of Learned Societies, CAORC, and the Social Science Research Council contributed generously to my research. Regarding the contents of this study, sections of Chapter 5 appeared in *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* (*CSSAAME*) 21 (October 2001). I thank Duke University Press and the editors of *CSSAAME* for allowing me to reanimate this material here. Yannis Megas has generously permitted the use of images in his possession. In this respect, I also express my appreciation for the generous assistance from Robert Elsie and the staff at the Albanian Historical Institute/Instituti i Historise, Tirana, Albania, and the Netherlands Institute of Military History.

Finally, a brief explanation of the terms and spellings of geographic locations is in order. As this book's fundamental agenda is to argue that there are different ways of interpreting events in the western Balkans depending on context and perspective, I have been particularly keen on demonstrating this by adopting terminology that reflects regional variety. In other words, I utilize place names and spellings, on several occasions throughout the book, that are normally not found today. I employ these spellings interchangeably with the more conventional place names and their spellings to highlight the fluidity of identity

claims and associations among people living in the western Balkans at an earlier time.

This especially applies to place names found in archival material. I will attempt to faithfully represent the place names when citing primary documents as they appear in the source. I choose to do this in the case of the Ottoman documentation in particular for another reason as well: Future scholars will have to know these spellings to properly research the catalogs in Istanbul. For example, the region and village that is known as Gusinje, Gucia, or Gusi today appears in the Ottoman catalogs as Gosine. The same applies for present-day Peja, which could appear as Ipek (Ottoman) or Peć. Even more varied are places such as Shkodër/Işkodra/Scutari or Janina/Yanya/Ioannina.

This needs to be faithfully reflected in the book if my fundamental point about the importance of using terminology to accurately reflect the multiplicity of possible interests and associations is to be respected. To further make this point, I recognize an important regional distinction between peoples of the Balkans in the nineteenth century; normative terms such as Albanians, Greeks, and Albania and Serbia are not accurate for the period. It will become clear over the course of the book that there is utility in abandoning what I think are anachronistic terms linked today to ethnonational affiliations and selecting, instead, the local terminology individuals used to self-identify in various contexts.



Map 1 Malësi local communities.

Map 2 Ottoman Rumeli, 1878–1912.

Introduction: The Search for a Narrative of Transition

> Day by day and almost minute by minute
> the past was brought up to date...
> All history was a palimpsest,
> scraped clean and reinscribed
> exactly as often as was necessary.
>
> George Orwell, *1984*

On the outskirts of the Ottoman provincial capital of Manastir (present-day Bitola, Macedonia), trouble was brewing in the summer heat of 1908. Over a period of months, Ottoman troops staged protests over poor living conditions throughout the provinces (*vilâyet*) of Kosovo, Manastir, Yanya, and Salonika (within which the geographic region known as Macedonia was found). As large numbers of the Third Army Corps expressed their frustrations, local peasants and merchants, equally disaffected by the state of affairs, finally joined them. Within days, the confluence of dissatisfaction manifested in hitherto unseen alliances between civilian and soldier, creating a toxic mix of new possibilities that threatened to undermine the region's overall stability (Adanır 1996; Gingeras 2003; Tokay 1995).

Shocked by the barrage of telegrams indicating that this revolt was spreading, Sultan Abdülhamid II, in power since 1876, took the advice of his inner court and abdicated control of the state's daily affairs to a hastily organized committee. Claiming authority over the rebelling troops in far-away Macedonia, this "revolutionary" committee, consisting of a confused amalgamation of Istanbul intellectuals, helped initiate a period of Ottoman, Balkan, and larger European history that is today remembered as the "Young Turk Revolution" (Hanioğlu 2001). Neither comprising exclusively of ethnic Turks nor wishing to establish a "Turkish" state out of the heterogeneous Ottoman Empire, the members of this loose coalition used their newfound access to the media to transmit the battle cry of "Long live the

Constitution (*meşrutiyet*), freedom (*hürriyet*), union (*ittihat*), and progress (*terakki*)" throughout the diverse, troubled empire.

Previously formulated as the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), this assembly of the eastern Mediterranean's best and brightest energized the empire's heterogeneous communities to display one last gesture of unity. As can be seen from the photographs of the period, this movement enjoyed grassroots as well as elite support. Within days of the declaration of a new order in Istanbul, the streets of Beirut, Baghdad, Jeddah, Salonika, and Shkodër filled with crowds waving newly produced banners, all proclaiming the revolutionary mantra: freedom, union, and progress (Ahmad 2007; Zürcher 2010).

The significance of such gatherings, however, is not solely explained by the nascent revolution. Not just a show of solidarity for a set of abstract liberal principles au courant in larger Europe at the time, the staged and spontaneous displays of relief, joy, and hope registered a number of social, political, and economic currents particular to western Balkan Ottoman communities. For the most part, scholars have misrepresented these diverse animating sentiments.

While the Ottoman Empire as a whole represented a complex, multilayered series of constantly shifting polities, state bureaucracies, and regional affiliations over the course of its 600-year history, scholars trying to make sense of the 1908 revolts from the perspective of the Balkans have tended to reduce them to parochial ethnonational terms (Lange-Akhund 1998). As a consequence, many post-Ottoman historians believe that the 1908 events represent a culmination of decades of strife between suspiciously well-defined groups who could fully articulate their ethnonational demands using constructs and claims about their specific "nation's" unity and cohesion (Balkanski 1982).

But can historical scholarship really represent these activities that brought the Ottoman sultan's regime to its knees strictly as attempts by distinct nationalist groups to realize political independence? Perhaps, as proposed in this study, it is more productive to place the events leading up to the Young Turk Revolution, and much of the 1800–1912 history covered here, within a more dynamic, less neatly confined process. Such a process, if properly analyzed, would suggest that a plethora of ill-defined, constantly reformulating groups emerged within the Ottoman Empire rather than the perpetually competing "ethnonational" monoliths claimed in the post-Ottoman historiography.

Put in another way, the analysis that I offer here is intended to counter the triumphalist history of the inevitable twentieth-century

western Balkan "nation." I take the view that the "ethnonational" subjects living "under" Ottoman rule should not be analyzed in fixed, essentialist terms. Such a challenge to conventional wisdom would thus offer a counternarrative to what much of the scholarship on the modern Balkans posits is a distinctive trajectory of separate "national identities" culminating in "revolutionary" events such as those in 1908.

A direct consequence of stepping away from some of these basic assumptions about how people understood their world prior to World War I may be the discovery that the western Balkans region covered in this book (much of modern-day Montenegro, Serbia, Kosovo, Albania, Macedonia, and northwestern Greece) actually does not warrant being characterized as a "powder keg" of ethnic, sectarian strife.[1] Such a corrective claim thus would have long-term benefits to fundamentally changing how we interpret the ambiguous associational matrix at work in the late Ottoman Balkans. Rather than simply seeing division and strife, there may be a new set of analytical principles for us to develop that can ultimately change the way we look at the Balkans today.

One way I believe this is possible is by inspecting photographs of the period. For example, in figure I.1 we see three well-armed men whose names we happen to know because they became retroactively celebrated as national heroes in official Albanian historiography.

In the past, just identifying these men as "Albanian" would suffice to explain their motivations and the context in which the photo was taken. Long seen as nationalists, it would seem logical to assume that they participated in the events of 1908 on behalf of "Albanian" causes.[2] The problem, however, is that the complete photo (figure I.2) actually tells a different story.

By looking closely at those standing next to and behind these "Albanian" heroes, it becomes clear that they were not celebrating the downfall of the sultan in order to actualize a greater "Albanian" cause. If anything, in the summer of 1908 it was the rise of a new *Ottoman* regime that they celebrated. In other words, reforming the Ottoman Empire to these men was key. More important, looking at the photo closely and analyzing the clothing of those standing around these "Albanians" reveals that Bulgarians, Turks, Albanians, Serbs, and Greeks were actually celebrating this auspicious moment together.

A more thorough vetting of figure I.2 does much to contravene scholarship, and general media coverage, which both rely on sensationalist tropes of generic ethnic and sectarian strife in the Balkans.

Figure I.1 Close up (taken from figure I.2) of Mihal Grameno, Çerçiz Topulli, and Resneli Ahmed Niyazi Bey in Manastir, July 10, 1908. (Photo courtesy: Manakis Brothers, permission generously granted by Yannis Megas.)

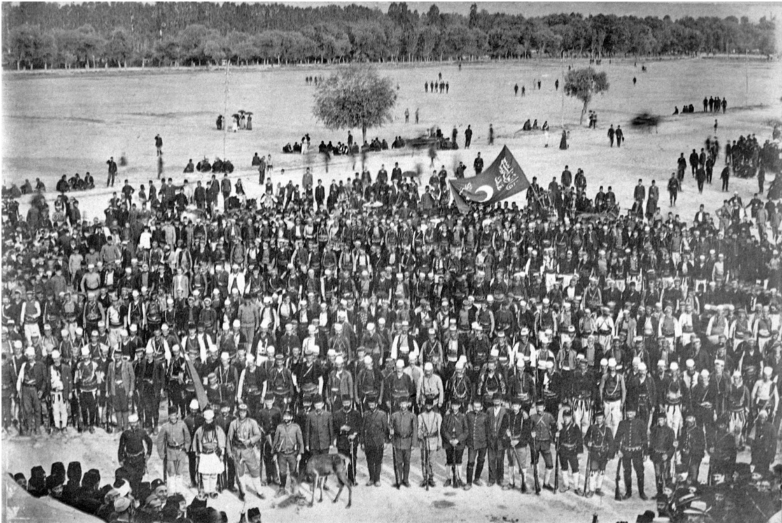


Figure I.2 Collective celebration of victory, Manastir, July 10, 1908. Note: first row, from right to left, a deer, Resneli Ahmed Niyazi Bey, Çerçiz Topulli, Mihal Grameno, and two unidentified men dressed in formal Ottoman military uniforms. (Photo courtesy: Manakis Brothers, permission generously granted by Yannis Megas.)

The wide spectrum of Ottoman subjects gathered for the photograph actually tells us that these men were not representing a particular group with aspirations to separate from their ethnically or religiously "different" neighbors. To the contrary, the cause these men stood behind can best be encapsulated by what was emblazoned on the flag waving in the background: Constitution, Freedom, Union, and Progress. Put differently, those who supported the new constitutional regime did so as Ottomans first and Albanians, Serbs, Turks, Greeks, or Bulgarians second (Bartl 1968: 156; Tokay 1995: 164–165).

In this vein, *Reinstating the Ottomans* tells the larger story of the western Balkans by using a number of new perspectives aimed at influencing how we can study not only the larger region but also much of the modern era. At the heart of this exercise is to challenge the heavy emphasis on narratives that attempt to depict a social milieu weighted by frustrated nationalist ambitions and brutal "Turkish" (read: Muslim) suppression of ethnic and religious "minorities." As argued throughout, such narrative tropes have long depended on our uncritical acceptance of a claim that peoples living in such a vast geographic area shared more in common with unknown people living hundreds of miles away because they were categorically of the same "ethnicity" than with neighbors who were often of a different faith and thus a different "ethnic group." Rather than providing clarity, using such narrowly defined ethnic or religious categories actually fails to account for the manifested diversity and cultural integration revealed in figure I.2.

Rewriting the Late Ottoman Context

I propose that only by highlighting the fact that the peoples of the western Balkans navigated their complex worlds by using *different strategies and articulations of group solidarity at different times* can we possibly make sense of the region. How else can we account for the fact that on at least three significant occasions during the 1800–1912 period covered in this book, large numbers of Ottoman subjects were given the opportunity to claim political, economic, and cultural independence from the empire? And yet, as in 1908, the vast majority of those retroactively called today Albanians, Serbs, Greeks, Bulgarians, or Vlachs continued to die for a dynasty that, in hindsight, had run its course in history.

Explaining the conditions in which these peoples made such decisions outside the narrow confines of a particular modernist terminology constitutes one of this book's primary challenges. In presenting an alternative reading of events over the last century of Ottoman rule

in the western Balkans, one that does not restrain us from considering "contradictions" and "paradoxes," *Reinstating the Ottomans* offers a new narrative about "anomalous" displays of loyalty to the Ottoman state across putative ethnic and sectarian divides. To accomplish such a task, however, first requires a reassessment of the sources.

Methodological Challenges

As suggested earlier, our ability to recognize Resneli Ahmed Niyazi Bey, Çerçiz Topulli, and Mihal Grameno in photographs may prove helpful in accurately understanding the dynamics surrounding their activities. The easiest route to take is to associate them with a larger event that speaks to the historical story of "Albanians," if not exclusively, at least prominently. The problem is that any ability to interpellate such historical figures ex post facto as distinctly of one ethnonational group is possible only in the context of a domineering ideological monolith shutting out alternative explanations for the way people socialize and thus contribute to the development of modern states. In this instance, the problem is a failure to account for the possibility that the men shown in figure I.2 could not have envisioned the world experienced after World War I. Being an "Albanian," "Greek," "Serb," or "Bulgarian," in other words, meant a very different thing prior to 1912; indeed, it meant something very different, depending on context, to each man in the photograph, his neighbors, and the many Ottoman and foreign state bureaucracies that had to engage such people.

In this respect, it is crucial to remember that in 1908, the western Balkans still had not experienced the traumas of the 1912–1913 Balkan wars and the final demise of the empire after World War I. The world of everyone living in the region was still largely an Ottoman one. That is to say, people of "different" faiths, ethnicities, and classes continued to live with each other in often very "mixed" communities. Such fusion was not considered "unnatural;" the only calls for "correction" took place after the region was swept by a new set of governing principles in 1912.[3] This point is made clearer when examining photographs taken during and after the 1908 revolt with a new sensitivity to some of the methodological challenges facing us as we read back into the past.

By returning the Ottoman context to our analysis and armed with various tools not predicated on assuming ethnicity divided the region, we suddenly recognize that when exploring a crucial period of transition such as 1875–1881, we are dealing with polyglot societies

ambiguously fused by a modern state apparatus—the military or formal religious institutions—that at the time was busily attempting to erase regional differences as much as exploit them. If anything united these disparate groups in a time of crisis it was the fact that they were first and foremost subjects of the Ottoman state, something scholars are beginning to realize as they study early post-Ottoman societies that resisted adopting the narrow "nationalist" identities of modern states (Meeker 2002). In this respect, the western Balkans constituted in the 1800–1912 period a confluence of autonomous, ever-shifting polities that interacted with each other and the larger world in frequently changing ways. These interchanges were in varying degrees conducted through the filter of an Ottoman administration and a larger Ottoman cultural, economic, and political context. At the same time, however, these interchanges also reflected the numerous avenues of action available to peoples in the period. In the end, telling this story by highlighting a complicated set of conditions helps introduce the possibility that we can use the Balkans to enter into a broader theoretical and historically interpretive discussion on, among other things, "modernity" (Cooper 2005: 113–117).

In this regard, *Reinstating the Ottomans* should be read as a critique marshaled against the constraints of entrenched methods of writing history that generally locates "modernity" as external to events in the Ottoman Balkans. In particular, the spatial, cultural, and economic units termed in ethnonational frames by "national" historiographies of the twentieth century prove to be restrictively self-referential and internalist, and they selectively ignore the intersecting forces that make the Ottoman Balkans so unambiguously valuable to studying the larger issues related to "modernity" in greater Europe. There is, in other words, no possible justification for writing an exclusively "national" story prior to the demise of the Ottoman state. A detailed comprehensive analysis that foregrounds the "local" serves better to address the possibility that subtle characteristics of modern development discernable in the early twentieth-century western Balkans have a connection more genealogical than teleological to the post-Ottoman "modernity" that supervened after World War I.

For reasons all too apparent when contextualizing the scholarship of the post-Ottoman Balkans, ideologically motivated scholars preaching ethnic separation, the "war on terror," or the clash of civilizations have resisted the corrective scholarship now emerging from outside the region (Hoxhaj 2008: 65–82; Ramet 2005). At the heart of this hesitance to move beyond long-debunked social science paradigms claiming that primordial or functionalist ethnoidentities

animated events in the Balkans is the relative strategic importance given to those regions still under Ottoman rule in 1912.

As has been observed throughout the world, the process of state centralization through the politics of ethnic or sectarian exclusivism has become synonymous with "modernity" (Scott 1999). In the case of the regions under study here—Albania, southern Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, and Kosovo—this entailed an often violent campaign of co-opting or even permanently removing the various self-administering polities that existed in the western Balkans prior to 1912. In their place would have to be a distinctively flat explanation of the events that led to the eventual demise of the Ottoman Balkans. As a result, in the hands of scholars preaching a post-Ottoman state-building storyline, the pre-1912 period was infused with hostility as the oppressive "Turkish" empire aggressively suppressed the "natural" nationalist ambitions of putative Serbs, Albanians, Bulgarians, or Greeks (Iseni 2008).

The problem is that large parts of the western Balkans were "liberated" only recently. This has meant that many of the inhabitants of Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, and parts of Serbia and Montenegro remain in a kind of developmental black hole. The lingering Ottoman characteristics—"mixed" neighborhoods, the ability to speak others' languages, shared religious ceremonies, and so on—found in these areas well into the second half of the twentieth century have left many state loyalists to question these peoples' ethnonational and sectarian loyalties. As a result, throughout post-Ottoman Yugoslavia, Greece, Bulgaria, and Albania, these phenomena have inspired new discourses of primitivism to emerge (Ghodsee 2009; Wachtel 1998). Conscious of the fact that it was only in the mid-1920s when Yugoslavia, the independent state of Albania, and large parts of what is today northern Greece could start to integrate these disparate subjects into what became for most their final ethnic "home," successor states were compelled to adopt particularly aggressive campaigns of social engineering (Banac 1988: 22–114; Skoulidas 2002).

Among other things, this "educational" program included emphasizing an essentialist identity politics that projected backward into the history covering the Ottoman era—a tale of rape and plunder. As a consequence, what transpired in the western Balkans prior to the Balkan Wars of 1912 is either purposely ignored or framed in the stifling language of ethnonationalism. Ostensibly, this post-Ottoman literature informs a professional logic among social scientists today that overshadows the fact that these regions were not politicized during the Ottoman era in an ethnically polarized manner. Appreciating

this, the present study highlights a dynamic set of locally focused contexts that, once studied in detail without the filter of presumed universal ethnonational and sectarian associations, can help tell a story of transformation in the late-nineteenth-century Balkans that is not teleological and thus not programmatically self-serving to modern state propagandists. Put differently, instead of positing events and the ambitions of local actors as precursors to the nation (Albanian, Greek, Serbian, etc.) in ways that assume these "modern," post–World War I states were historical inevitabilities, *Reinstating the Ottomans* unfolds a far more complex set of conditions that seemed to have shaped how locals in various locations took advantage of possibilities at the time, contradicting the limiting set of ambitions associated today with "Western"-imposed concepts of modernity.

The Order of the Book

In highlighting variables of the interactions between people who make history, we can begin to de-emphasize the acts of prominent men and so-called universal truths that clashed with foreign—Ottoman or Austro-Hungarian—occupation. In the process, we undermine the very foundation of modern Balkan historiography that relies on the trope of nationalist intellectual heroes.[4] The task begins by highlighting the variety of individual experiences and their often changing constituent groups in face of widespread economic, political, and social change. In this regard, the most successful examples of history writing have come from the works of creative writers who developed innovative techniques to represent such crucial moments of the past.[5]

It is possible, in other words, to talk about events and the people involved in them outside the strategically broad and ambiguous categories that are directly associated with the nation-state of the post-Ottoman period. Chapter 1 does this by undermining the practice of associating people living in the premodern Balkans with events in late-nineteenth-century Ottoman Macedonia and ultimately with Albanians, Serbs, Greeks, or Bulgarians of the twenty-first century.[6] Perhaps the most striking conclusion resulting from researching this period is that these peoples prior to 1912 had no firm ethnonational consciousness that superseded their immediate local needs, which often consisted of associating and collaborating with people who would today be considered their "ancient enemies."[7]

Chapter 1 will thus suggest that alternative interpretations of the past 600 years of Ottoman presence in the western Balkans are not

only possible but also essential to breaking out of the stranglehold of the ascendant narrative of eurocentric modernity. Looking into the incorporation of different polities into the expanding Ottoman enterprise from the early fourteenth-century onward, a more interactive and ultimately cohesive story emerges where certain indigenous stakeholders are as instrumental to Ottoman success in the region as the putative Ottoman military and cultural fanaticism so often cited in twentieth-century scholarship. In other words, there is both continuity and transformation in the Ottoman Balkans with the inhabitants being fully integrated into this long 600-year period.

This segues to a particularly close study, in Chapter 2, of the *Tanzimat* period (1839–1876) and the generation of western Balkan natives such a multifaceted process influenced. In understanding the specificity of a phenomenon widely studied in the scholarship on modernity, the intermediaries who seemingly evolve out of the process of Ottoman society's exposure to the "West" will prove more complicated and filled with contradictions and paradoxes. Demonstrating this imbalance, in turn, helps strengthen the overall presentation of the cases in this book in that the parameters for action and self-articulation are determined in this crucial period.

This period ends with cataclysmic events (1875–1881) afflicting a near deathblow to the Ottoman state, its emerging bureaucratic elite, and the residual "middle class" that had been thriving until then. All these institutions and societies entrenched in them faced a regressive assertion of order, one that saw the international community, newly constituted around a set of hazy diplomatic principles, circumvent Ottoman sovereign management of the Balkans. It is within the context of insolvency, bureaucratic turmoil, and a rise to authoritarian rule with a newly imposed sultan in 1876 that Chapter 3 asks new questions about both the ascendant voices of the era and, more important, the purported nationalist renaissance that would shape the period. After all, this is a time when the realization of Montenegrin, Serbian, and Romanian independence corresponds with a new centralizing state in Istanbul. As the chapter demonstrates, the subsequent battles between the *Tanzimat* generation, reconfigured groups of local stakeholders, and the new regimes along the Ottoman frontiers suggested to large numbers of Ottoman citizens a lack of order that they had long feared.

Amid this mess, the presumptions of liberal Europe's power are persistently challenged; the ability of local communities to undermine the precursors to a global set of governing principles contradicts

the characterization of this period as a watershed. Chapter 4 recognizes these crucial years as disruptive and in many ways instrumental in introducing new orders of governance that are incongruent to the dominant narrative found today. The resulting "borderlands" emerging from the processes to which I refer constitute a plethora of issues that opened up new channels of politics to many new actors in the late Ottoman story (Peacock 2010). Many of these new opportunities were products of new government instruments meant to streamline the ability of formal state institutions to work beyond the limitations established specifically by the Treaty of Berlin in 1878 and the more general Congress of Vienna agenda established in 1815 (Zamoyski 2007).

To some, the modern identities gravitating around this state of affairs would best be read as "constructs," products of an often violent process of assimilation and effective cultural erasure (Knauft 2002). As modern state institutions erected after 1878 try to codify collective identities around national myths and standardized languages, charting how such processes in Serbia and Montenegro reflect back onto new strategies adopted by the Ottoman government raises questions about just how instrumental were subaltern actions to the specific growth of nationalism prior to the modern post-Ottoman state. Perhaps ironically, I suggest in various ways in chapters 4 and 5 that this process of state-organized mass assimilation in order to shore up defenses along newly drawn frontiers did take place in some form during the 1800–1912 period. That said, these "modernist" reforms did not always work out as originally planned. Border areas in particular became incubators for new possibilities and ultimately, what is often called alternative modernities (Spitulnik 2002: 198).

After pinpointing a set of tensions within which the Ottoman Empire's disparate Tosk/Geg/South Slav/Western Bulgarian communities undermined an international order that hoped to codify ethnic and sectarian divides on maps, the specifics of imperial centralization under a rigid regime of fiscal austerity and new standards of "minority" politics are explored in Chapter 5. What is highlighted, however, by studying the various attempts to indoctrinate people through schools—and an expanded investment in education in general—are the contradictory and often counterintuitive results springing from these efforts. While I do not conclude that these policies were successful, the attempts to implement them nevertheless had a significant impact on how large numbers of people socialized locally and interacted with the larger world.

Repositioning the Ottoman Experience in Modern History

Throughout, *Reinstating the Ottomans* reinterprets the numerous Ottoman administrative reforms over the course of the nineteenth century to highlight that local communities and individuals had a full range of possible paths to take when facing new challenges. Be it through the state bureaucracy, within which many people rose in prominence, aligning with neighbors, or reaching out beyond the region, a constantly changing range of variables affected the day-to-day conditions in the Balkans. Not restrained by any single set of loyalties and political or economic systems, a number of Ottoman administrators and locals of all ranks in society adapted to the increasingly threatening world in ways that prove to be some of the least appreciated struggles in the modern era.[8] The fact that the inhabitants of the western Balkans would continuously disappoint outsiders' efforts to foment violence between neighbors, manipulate local political ambitions, or economically "penetrate" potentially lucrative regional economies not only reflects the level of a larger Ottoman success at managing such diversity but also presents another kind of challenge to the old methods of telling the story of modernity. As will become clear in the following chapters, local agents outside the immediate control of the authorities and long celebrated "nationalist intellectuals" often dictated the direction that state reforms and social movements took.

As the work of Anastasia Karakasidou (1997) has revealed in the context of Macedonia, the reality of the local (*dopyi*) throughout the region's modern history often undermined the capacity of the state and self-appointed nationalist leaders to control how and with whom local communities associated. This suggests that reading the events of the 1908 revolt (or any number of interlinking or disparate events from 1800 onward) in terms not directly relying on the anachronistic terminology of the post-Ottoman state proves not only possible but also crucial to helping us reinterpret the larger context of the developments of the modern world. In many ways, claims of the "rebirth" of Balkan nationalist ambitions during the Ottoman period constitutes some of the ways apologists for contemporary Balkan states try to associate their specific nationalism with this "modernity." If true, the supposition that modern-era Balkan nationalisms are firmly linked to a very specific pattern of development would have far-reaching theoretical consequences (Mitchell 2000: 1–34). The problem is that these nationalist historiographies

too narrowly define what modernity looks like by uncritically relying on "models" of analysis that allocate far too little attention to the specificities of local context and pay too much attention to a few isolated members of the bourgeoisie.

While the Ottoman Empire has increasingly been included in comparative studies about the period and some have even identified hints of "modernism" emerging from the society at large (Gran 1998; Salzmann 1993), this vast and complex social, political, and cultural set of experiences either remains obscure to nonspecialists or is assumed to be merely a product of "copying" from a generic Europe (Bhabha 1985). As scholars of the Ottoman Empire attempt to make their respective stories relevant to a larger European story, their studies have had to adopt a contrastive approach that seems to accept that a schism between modern and premodern, and between East and West existed within the Ottoman Empire. The "westernized" Ottomans, in other words, were consciously "modernizing" their otherwise premodern society (Deringil 2003). It is suggested here that in all corners of the Ottoman Empire, in our case the western Balkans, the communities engaging the larger world through trade, protests to diplomatic treaties, or migration proved very much the incubators of certain (for the lack of a better word) modernities that should inform our more general theories of state formation and nationalism in an otherwise "different" world (Blumi 2011). Put differently, in some important ways, Ottoman subjects were as much a part of the modern world as their "European" counterparts.

One of the means of proving this deeper complexity is to study apparent fissures that to date have uniquely been read as ethnonationalist (and thus somewhat European-inspired) uprisings against the Ottoman state. Take the events in Macedonia again as an example. One could not blame the people for celebrating such a moment as the abdication of Sultan Abdülhamid II's rule considering what had been happening to their homeland over the past 40 years. External economic and political pressures put on local farmers, for instance, created a number of distinctive sociological crises during the 1800–1908 period in the many disparate communities spread across Macedonia. Their fertile lands that once fed local consumption needs and produced a profitable annual surplus of cash crops for the Ottoman state became arenas of capitalist competition. This led to pressures on peasants to sell their land, hence creating numerous demographic shifts that impoverished many and poisoned relations between neighbors. Since at least 1893, these tensions matriculated into organized clashes as competing groups formed out of decimated communities.

Many of these so-called *çeta*, like those shown in figure I.3, were the simple bandits the literature makes them out to be. Others, however, proved well-organized groups unified by common causes that far too often are misrepresented in narrow ethnonational terms (Perry 1988: 197–206). Rather than thinking of these groups' activism as an inevitable nationalist "awakening," however, I posit that there were more complicated and less transparent factors at play in such events that require serious consideration.

Aside from alienating locals from their lands, the struggle for economic ascendancy in southeastern Europe led to certain capital investments, especially in railroad networks, that private European bankers hoped would flood the Ottoman territories with imports (Gounaris 1993). Such investment in infrastructure, mirroring similar privately financed expansion throughout the industrializing world, would ideally enable foreign investors to cheaply extract the empire's wealth—poppy for opium, wheat, timber, coal, or cotton. A story told far too many times during this period of "modernity," this shift to economic exploitation under the guise of foreign-imposed "reform" measures was ultimately at the expense of local stability. The subsequent struggle to adapt to the presence of large numbers of European troops since 1902 transformed local politics, resulting in the now ubiquitous cyclical violent clashes that appeared so provocatively in European newspapers at the time (Sowards 1989: 15–50).

This classic order of political life in the world should not seem alien to us today; what has long been treated as quintessentially "non-Western" about the patronage networks aspiring leaders were required to maintain has, in fact, a lot more in common with self-declared modern states than initially thought (Mitchell 2000). What remains distinct about the late Ottoman Balkan experience, and thus helpful to rethinking the entire question of modernity at large, is just how extraordinarily contentious and fluid the process was. In the late Ottoman era, the perpetual quest for local, regional, and transregional power gravitated around constituencies that were constantly adjusting to local factors. In other words, nothing was certain in local and regional politics, and power was (and is) both precarious and constantly in need of reinforcement through means other than the threat of violence. To study this "chaos" requires abandoning some of the inflexible terms of the scholarship and returning to the era of focus. At the same time, such an exercise may just prove helpful in opening up new avenues to appreciating the dynamics behind the creation of our "modern" world without the occlusion typical of the vast majority of accounts (Cooper 2005: 132–133).

Unfortunately, in the effort to reflect accurately this Ottoman-era diversity, the very narrative form of the historian—the story—often loses shape, definition, and order. Until recently, the successful historian's task seemed to balance the need to represent the empire's complexity while still maintaining narrative order. The resulting product was often an anachronistic harmonization of disparities that leads to explaining the decline of heterogeneous empires and the rise of the ethnonational state model as an inevitability (Roudometoff 2001; Sugar 1983). The act of writing the history of the Balkans, in other words, has been largely one of simplification so that a linear story linking the modern state with the past can be told in a coherent—as well as marketable—way. This means that instead of reconsidering the value of evoking the ethnonational associations, which postmodernist theory has challenged, many in the Ottoman and Balkan subfields simply ignore the serious methodological and ethical issues raised and continue to analyze past human interactions in a reductive manner.[9]

In light of previous innovations in the representation of the past in respect to the history of Europe, Latin America, or Africa, some historians and sociologists have nuanced traditional understandings of the world by comparing the Ottoman Empire with other states spanning vast portions of the planet.[10] Such innovations have added texture to an otherwise stale narrative of "declining empires." The problem, however, is that the scale of analysis remains at the level of the imperial state that supposedly suppressed the inevitable demands of well-formed groups that in time articulated ethnonational demands (Barkey 2008: 277–288). Yet, is it reasonable to assume that such surveys of central state bureaucracies actually do a better job of capturing what is happening in empires doomed to succumb to modernity? How can we really frame the disparate events taking place, for example, in Bulgaria, Baghdad, Yemen, and Anatolia (all provinces in the Ottoman Empire) as part of a generic Ottoman experience without differentiating one case from the other?

As already suggested, part of the problem is the use of the benefit of hindsight by historians and social scientists. Scholars know on which ascendant group to focus when looking for the origins of modern, postimperial societies. But does exclusive analysis of those who survived the traumas of the Great War and the often brutal postwar period that erased previously dynamic modes of interaction really do justice to understanding the pre-World War I period? From the instant that the scholar eliminates for the sake of coherence the first "nonessential" local factor from the premodern story, the selective

process inevitably undermines the very claims of objectivity on which the writer bases the whole project as well as succumbs to forces of elimination that still did not exist in 1912 (McCarthy 2001: 39; Stokes 1997). What is analyzed and ultimately presented as history, in other words, leaves out as much as it includes (White 1973: 31–38). Visually we can see this point clearly with the two photos taken of the "declaration" of Albanian statehood, the first on the cover of this book and the second in figure 5.1.

To flesh out more deeply what is at play in these complex societies we need to break down our units of analysis. At the heart of this process is separating the terms we use to discuss these varied exchanges between locals and the state from the post-Ottoman categories such as ethnonational—Serb, Albanian, Greek—or misleadingly uniform sectarian terms—Muslim, Christian, Jewish (*millet* in the Ottoman context)—to reflect better the ever-changing dynamics at the local level. We end this introduction by introducing some of the kinds of categories we can use to better identify and, thus, differentiate local events from each other and then position them within a larger analytical framework that argues for seeing the Ottoman experiences as important windows into understanding the modern world.

Disaggregating the Ottoman World

As already intimated, photos of the events taking place in the summer of 1908 captured people who constituted a disaggregate composition of local inhabitants. Identifying these people beyond the specific context of their meetings, that is, by emphasizing their being "Albanian," would prove anachronistic and significantly distort the dynamics surrounding the events of July 1908. What these photos actually suggest is not a strong ethnonational association, but the opposite, a fluid social and political environment that at this point in time coalesced to demonstrate support for an Ottoman constitution, and a new reform regime that actually emphasized union, not communal "autonomy" or worse, separation. As even the most strident ethnocentric bigot would admit, Ottoman-era "Macedonia" consisted of "mixed" social, economic, and cultural communities whose reference points were local, rather than some ambiguous and foreign "national" association (Mazower 2002: 39–44).

One useful way of demonstrating this is through an analysis of the clothing worn by those captured in photographs of the events in Manastir. It is readily accepted, for instance, that community

associations were expressed materially in the way people dressed, spoke, and socialized (Gjergji 1988). What analyzing clothes prior to the 1912 catastrophe should not do, however, is steer us to identify people along generic "national" lines on account of what is assumed to be ethnic-specific styles. Rather, a better way to think of the clothing men in these photographs wore is that they signaled to others from which region, valley, and even extended family someone came (Fischer and Roach-Higgins 1992: 8–28). In many of the regions from which these men came (we know this by learning to "read" the subtle differences in design), the closest neighbor, and thus someone who would share to an extent the same clothing patterns, may have been someone of a "different" faith and ethnicity.

Appreciating that these realities did not necessarily translate into violence between Christians and Muslims and between Serbs and Bulgarians proves a particularly important challenge considering the shortcomings of the secondary literature published since 1912. Stuck as we are in our terms of distinction, we miss the many examples of locals creating temporary alliances that ignored such "differences." I turn to figure I.3 to make my point.

Figure I.3 Mixed group of rebels under the inaccurate caption: *Serb çeta reisleri* (Serb rebel/bandit leaders). (Photo courtesy: Manakis Brothers, permission generously granted by Yannis Megas.).

Even without expertise in regional dress, it is clear that by contrasting the clothing worn by the men shown in figure I.3, people associated with each other in different ways. At the same time, there are subtle differences in the way each man is dressed. A deeper appreciation, therefore, for what distinguished one form of clothing from another may help pinpoint the distinct geographic, probable linguistic and religious affiliation of these men. It is important to stress, however, that it is not enough to simply identify Albanians, Serbs, and Greeks, or Muslims and Christians. Even if we recognize that what most of the men are wearing suggest they are Muslim/Christian, Albanian/Serb/Bulgarian, as explained throughout this study, the central criteria of self-identification for these people was the family, village, and region from which one came, not some abstract "nation" that for many still did not exist. Therefore, the emphasis must remain local; once we recognize that such a local context was animated by issues not immediately informed by ethnic difference, we can undermine the most dominant trope in the literature: ethnic conflict.

The value of photos such as those shown in figure I.3 to the larger methodological correction proposed by this book rests on the diversity of claims of association that these men could have possibly made. Taken in 1908 by the Manakis brothers of Istanbul, the photo was eventually published in an album commemorating the revolution and presented to a small list of dignitaries (Margulies 1997). Importantly, the original intent of the Manakis brothers' trip to the region was to document what would be the equivalent in the United States at the time as the "Wild West." To most of the self-isolating Istanbul bourgeoisie, through the prism of local media, the western Balkans constituted a tantalizingly violent part of the world inhabited by a generic Balkan wild man whose "tribalistic" tendencies had long made great copy in the big city newspapers (Brummett 2000: 68–69, 195–198, 318–322). However, armed with the tropes of so-called backward people found throughout the "premodern" world, the Manakis brothers were hardly qualified to interpret accurately the photos they took.

While the photographers gave figure I.3 the caption "Serb rebel/bandit leaders," the clothing worn by the men suggest that a much more interesting and complicated situation had been captured by the camera. For one, these men are probably one of the many roaming *çeta* (armed bands often labeled as bandits in the press) who captured much of the world's attention (Perry 1988). Despite this "bandit" label, the men in this photo made their appearance in the summer

celebrations of a new government whose promises to its new constituents included law and order. For them, at this point in time, their political orientation superseded any practical economic one.

Beyond this, what makes the photo useful for our purposes is the fact that the men are not of a single "ethnic" or religious group. While the Manakis brothers called them "Serbs," the clothing these men were wearing would suggest something else. This then presents another problem: Who exactly were they?

Without the caption, most people today would assume that the men were northern Albanians because of the clothing. As noted in the ethnographic work of travelers to the region during this time (Elsie 1999), the distinguishing feature of many northern Albanian men are the decorated woolen trousers called *tirk* (sing.) worn by everyone in the photo. Usually accompanying the *tirk*, which is decorated differently along the legs, ankles, and hip areas to designate from which community someone came (see figure 2.1), is a vest called the *xhamadan* (jamadani), something most of the men are wearing as well. The *xhamadan* can be worn with or without sleeves and was often adorned with elaborate patterns, depending on the region and community. Added to the *xhamadan* is the *shokë/shoka* (sing.), tied around the waist and used to hold the finely tooled pistols that gunmakers in the Kosovo town of Ipek/Peja were especially famous for throughout Europe (Fontanes 1982).

While all the men were wearing distinctively "Albanian" items, it would be a mistake to assume that they are "Albanian." First, the headgear, which is equally important for identifying people in this period, suggest that the men in the photograph came from different religious groups. While it is not clear why the photographers identified these men so definitively as Serbs, a close look at the headgear worn by these men reveals that there were northern Albanians, local Serbs, and quite possibly Bulgarians in the group. Also, both Muslims and Christians are posing in the photo. Therefore, while all dressed in what would seem "Albanian" trousers and vests, these men were also wearing quite distinct caps, allowing us to conclude that the only "Albanian" in this photo (second from the left) is wearing the telltale white felt hat known as the *plis*. As for the others, they wore various caps, suggesting that this group is composed of men who had a number of possible social, cultural, and religious associations ranging from Serb, Bulgarian, and Orthodox Christian to ambiguous Muslim (first seated to the left).

This photo thus reveals that a complicated social and political dynamic was at play in the western Balkans at the time of the

declaration of the new Constitution in July 1908. The clothing worn by these subjects immediately challenges the idea that they were affiliated, however loosely, to the nationalist projects being promoted by neighboring states, often with limited success in Ottoman territories. The same holds true for figure I.2, where by scanning the entire group we find that participants came from a wide territory. More important, supposedly ethnic rivals—Bulgarians, Greeks, Albanians, Serbs, Turks—stood side by side in celebration of the Ottoman Empire's new beginnings that promised continued communal harmony.

These segmented communities had elaborate methods of self-orientation and retained such strong local affiliations that they often had long-standing tensions with what were ostensibly neighboring people of the same assumed "ethnic-linguistic group." These localisms carry significance in the Ottoman western Balkans and explain a great deal of nineteenth-century's history discussed throughout, in terms of both domestic forms of government—Ottoman attempts to expand the state's influence into what are ostensibly autonomous zones—and international relations as the "Great Powers" tried to dictate the affairs of the region. It is therefore crucial to take a moment and elaborate on the other ways men appearing in these photos distinguish themselves, a reflection of "local knowledge" that operated on many levels (Blumi 2004). Without allowing for such complexity to influence the way we interpret events in the sources, much of what happened in the western Balkans (and the entire Ottoman Empire) is lost to general administrative categories used in a post-Ottoman context. In the next section, we explore other ways the populations, who today would be putatively called Albanians, identified themselves and others. At the same time, these more precise and contemporary terms were often also used by state officials in their reports, differentiating one set of locals from others, terms, in other words, that were au courant to the Ottoman (and external) state authorities.

Differentiating Subjects: Regionalisms and the *Fis*

Much like their Slavic, Bulgarian, Vlach, and Hellenic counterparts in the western Balkans, Ottoman Albanians (*Arnavutlar* in Ottoman Turkish/*Shqiptarë* in Albanian) lived in diverse cultural milieus. A number of socioeconomic and practical factors account for this diversity. Economically speaking, *Arnavutlar/Shqiptarë* lived in distinct regions that offered a wide range of agricultural and commercial possibilities. To a large extent, topographical variations dictated

the manner in which communities raised livestock, cultivated and harvested cash crops, and otherwise lived self-sufficient lives. Over time, other factors also contributed to broad regional variations. By 1908, for instance, proximity to rail lines, newly constructed roads, or developed ports would have contributed the most to the nature, pace, and extent of economic development in one region or another. These factors shaped the way people socialized and organized communities, crucial to appreciate when studying periods in which large-scale movements of people created considerable social disruption, as discussed in Chapter 4.

In order to make sense of these variables as they evolved over time, some region-wide signifier that breaks up generic ethnonational categories such as “Albanian” may begin to help.[11] Adopting what turns out to be an often clumsy north/south Albanian binary is not the most eloquent way to make the larger methodological point. For our purposes here, however, it is useful in that these references to region are found in the Ottoman documentation, which means we can easily monitor how distinctions as broad as this one (see map for basic geographic position of each respective subgroup) functioned in the late-nineteenth-century western Balkans. Mihal Grameno, Çerçiz Topulli, and Resneli Ahmed Niyazi Bey, for example, may be more accurately identified as *Toskë* [Tosk when used as an adjective] who came from a region the Ottomans identified in their maps as *Toskalık* or “land of the *Toskë*.” Their regional dialects, clothing, and, for the most part, religious associations, all of which would immediately be recognizable to others, were significantly different from those of communities situated farther north, known as *Gegë* [Geg when used as an adjective].[12]

It is not suggested here that people at the time self-identified exclusively as either Tosk or Geg. That would simply replace one universal aggregate term with another. In fact, most people had multiple associations, which included region, village, class, profession and family, often used interchangeably. What using *Toskë/Gegë* does for this study, however, is to highlight the geographic subdivisions that did exist on a number of levels. This proved invaluable in the larger context of Ottoman social politics, where stereotypes about one group or another often influenced the way policies were implemented in the region. For example, *Gegë* were considered decidedly less eloquent and, especially those living in the mountainous areas of the Kosova and Işkodra *vilâyets*, were often depicted as both violent and borderline stupid; the quintessential hillbilly, in other words. *Toskë*, on the other hand, since so many became part of the Ottoman intellectual

elite and were most likely writing the descriptions of the region, positioned themselves to be the eloquent, civilized approximates of a proper European, a position often still seen today in greater Albanian cultural politics. Even a British visitor to the region in 1877 picked up on these stereotypes:

> The Albanians about Durazzo [present-day Durrës, Albania], and indeed the whole group of clans, Mahometan and Christian, that lie to the north of the Shkumbi river and the ancient Egnatian Way, belong to the Ghegga division of the race; those to the south of this line, including the non-Greek population of Epirus, being known by the general appellation of Tosks. The Gheggas . . . appeared very unslavonic in their characteristics—more lively, more masterful, and haughty—are described by travellers who are well acquainted with Tosks as less energetic and keen-witted than their southern relatives, and as more approaching the Slavs in temperament and manners. Certainly the Gheggas have in the course of their history had a large intermixture of Slavic blood, both Serb and Bulgarian, and I found that the Serbian language was intelligible to many at Durazzo, while at Antivari [present-day Bar, Montenegro] and elsewhere it is spoken by a large part of the population. The Tosks, on the other hand, have had at different times a large Greek intermixture, and it is a significant fact that in certain localities in their area the ancient Hellenic type of beauty . . . , which has vanished elsewhere, survives in its full perfection. To this Hellenic intermixture is probably due the superior keenness of the Tosk intellect. (Evans 1878: 131)

Keeping our level of abstraction at this *Toskë/Gegë*, that is, regional, level helps us appreciate certain historic patterns that clearly indicate not all regions of the Balkans were treated equally in the Ottoman context. Today, the areas in which *Toskë* interacted—what the Ottomans called *Toskalık (Toskëri* in the southern Tosk dialect)—are found in southern Albania, northern Greece, southern Italy, and in diasporas in Egypt, Romania, and North and South America. This seemingly wide geographic arena had been especially crucial to certain periods as *Toskë* integrated into the global economy.

This observation reinforces a point that is often lost in post-Ottoman studies. Some subregions in the western Balkans were far more successfully integrated into the Ottoman Empire and also the larger world, so much so that a disproportionate number of native *Toskë* entered into the inner circles of Ottoman state power. Indeed, considering the long history of Tosk migration into the larger Mediterranean world (and eventually around the world, as so many

from the Mediterranean did in this period), we may entertain calling the Ottoman Empire, in some key ways, a Tosk empire. In socioeconomic terms, each region within what the Ottomans in their documents called *Toskalık*—the provinces of Yanya (Janine), most of Manastir and Salonika—offered opportunities for temporary associations to form under varied socioeconomic conditions. The proximity to significant clusters of Moreans, natives of Bari, Epirots, southern Vlachs, and Ohrid-based "western" Bulgars (Macedonians) certainly helped some *Toskë* develop socioeconomic networks that opened (or closed) to them opportunities of trade and political collaboration well beyond their homeland. Such economic interests must have also influenced how some *Toskë* socialized and understood their long-term interests in the context of the Ottoman Empire, in which many prominent Tosk families had heavily invested for centuries.

This finally explains the distinct political orientation of many *Toskë* vis-à-vis others in the western Balkans. The famous Janissaries, who constituted the elite soldiers of the Ottoman Empire until their disbandment in 1826, had strong links with the local landowners of *Toskalık/Toskëri*. *Devşirme* (community levies for service to the state) recruitment in these areas was largely done along communal lines, reinforcing the notion that powerful locals negotiated greater influence with the state through their ability to manage their local populations (in other words, provide troops). Such connections with recruitment formed an intricate social and economic network that linked the regions in which Tosk soldiers were based—Algiers, Tunis, Cairo, Damascus, and eastern Anatolia—with their patrons back home in *Toskalık/Toskëri* or Istanbul.[13]

These channels of exchange would be vital to extending Tosk influence in Ottoman and larger European and Middle East politics. Local landowning elites had cultivated such links for centuries, allowing a lucrative relationship with Istanbul to develop as well as for the establishment of regional trade networks that often grew autonomously of Ottoman state control (Joffé 1996: 84). At one level, therefore, many of these southerners became one and the same as the Ottoman state.

Perhaps the most famous example of such collaboration was Muhammad (Mehmet) ʻAli of Kavala, who first helped recapture Egypt from Napoleon and later the Hijaz from the Wahhabis for the Ottoman state. For his services, the sultan granted Mehmet ʻAli the governorship of Egypt. Over the next two decades, relying mostly on Tosk soldiers he recruited from his homeland, Mehmet Ali performed a range of services for the Ottoman sovereign, including waging a war against fellow *Toskë* in the war for "Greek" independence (Marsot 1984: 32).

His was not the first example, however, of *Toskë* securing lucrative overseas posts through their connections with the Ottoman elite. As "*Arnavut*" garrisons were established throughout the Mediterranean from the sixteenth century onward, the cultural foundations for what remains today a fascinating (if not well-studied) history of Balkan cultural engagement with the Arabic-speaking world were established. Göriçeli Koçu Bey, the Köprülü clan, Ismail Qemali of Vlorë, Sinan Pasha of Topoyani, Ibrahim Temo of Ohrid, and the Frashëri brothers are but a few examples of the intellectual, administrative, and military influence that *Toskë* had on the Ottoman Empire throughout the centuries and their connections outside the region.

Speaking various dialects under the umbrella of the Albanian language (*Gjuha Shqipe*) known as forms of *Toskërisht*, it needs to be recalled that those I elect to call *Toskë* for the purposes of my methodological argument are themselves divided into subgroups with very specific associations based on the region from which they come, religious sect—various Sufi orders, Sunni Islam, Jewish congregations, and Orthodox Christianity—and economic orientation. Among these regional subgroups are the *Çams* (Chams) and *Arbrëshe* (in southern Italy) all who could be identified by their clothing and form of *Toskërisht* they spoke.[14]

Religiously, *Toskë* profess to most of the creeds and sects found in the larger Balkans. Large numbers associated with the Orthodox Christian Church (the *Rum* Patriarchate), which was at times significantly divided in the late Ottoman period. Throughout the centuries, advocates of autonomous "national" churches emerged in congregations throughout the southern Balkans, often challenging locals' perceptions of community and association beyond the immediate village or town (Beduli 1997).

For their part, Muslim *Toskë* were largely attached to various local Sufi branches or *tekkes*, which for hundreds of years claimed a spiritual foothold in the Balkans. Instead of creating a network of worshippers linked by a common affiliation, therefore, communities formed around locally based spiritual leaders who preached largely within the confines of a specific, geographically limited area. In other words, the communities created by these Sufi institutions remained geographically confined, largely structured around the town or village *tekke*. As a result, the entire southern region was shaped by a vibrant but highly disaggregated spiritual environment made even more diverse by the presence of a strong faction of the Bektashi, a sect composed of an amalgam of local adherents to the teachings of Haci Bektash, whose sense of

community in the period covered in this book was largely shaped by having been persecuted by the Ottoman state after 1826.[15]

The contrast between the interweaving networks linking *Toskë* to imperial power and the fluid and autonomous social milieu in the north (*Gegalık/Gegëni*) suggests that historians of the nineteenth-century Balkans must be sensitive to these regional distinctions when registering patterns of resistance, cooperation, and transformation. In the case of "Albania," the primary agents of Ottoman state power used to suppress local resistance in times of crisis throughout *Gegalık/Gegëni* were often of Tosk origin (Bouquet 2007: 297; Clayer 2005). As seen throughout, *Toskë* often made up the core of the government bureaucracy both in Istanbul and in the regional cities by the nineteenth century. As a result, it would be well-established Tosk bureaucrats who promoted the expansion of Ottoman state authority to *Gegëni* during the period of reform, or *Tanzimat* (1839–1876), administered by a new class of social elite—*effendiyya*—who ultimately promoted the expansion of state power with policies justified in terms that today would be considered racist.[16]

As discussed in great detail in chapters 2, 3, and 4, many elite *Toskë* believed that the northern mountain communities known as *Malësorë* were nothing better than tribal heathens who sorely needed to be civilized.[17] In this respect, over the course of the nineteenth century, the generic "northerner" would find its way in depictions published in newspapers, novels, and plays authored by *Toskë*. This is a period of transition I study in considerable detail throughout the book and I believe needs close analysis. It is essentially a period in which the immediacy of Ottoman power, as administered on behalf of the state by local community leaders—*bayraktar/bayraktarlar* (pl.)—is ultimately sacrificed for a more centralized state. These tensions between an emergent bureaucratic class consisting by the 1840s of large numbers of elite *Toskë* and the still very localized political order of the western Balkans manifested in a constant struggle to wrench influence out of the hands of local leaders. In the end, this bureaucratic class, consisting of men who had little of the qualities of the local leaders in respect to command a community's loyalty or capacity to enforce laws, mobilized an entire repertoire of coercive, bureaucratic, and cultural tools to undermine the power of the local. This rhetorical onslaught against these local "honorable men" proves a dominant theme in Chapter 2.

Bureaucratic struggles for ascendancy at the expense of a tried-and-true system of locally managed politics ultimately shaped the kind of "reforms" proposed by the mostly office-ridden, self-isolating

"middle class." In the end, instead of relying on a mutually beneficial system of shared responsibilities for maintaining fiscal and social stability, the nineteenth-century *Tanzimat* generation devised schemes to increasingly undermine localism, complaining about the putative local parochialism as a threat to "union," and "progress." Not only did these policies attempt to undermine the capacities of local communities to operate autonomously, but they also resulted in a destructive rivalry between the *effendiyya* and local surrogates who at once represented local constituencies as well as protected the larger interests of the Ottoman state.

The point to stress here is that these interests often crossed over the ethnonational and sectarian lines that we in the twentieth century have drawn between the peoples of the southern Balkans. Prominent *Toskë,* who have been retrospectively bestowed nationalist credentials, for instance, associated with non-Tosk neighbors to negotiate the possibility of forging a new country in the southern Balkans. Crucially, on most occasions, these discussions over unifying the southern Balkans in alliance against the surging Slavs or the conservative regime in Istanbul did not include the *Gegë* to the north of the Tosk regions.

Gegë lived in areas identified throughout this book by their Ottoman administrative names, which includes the provinces of Işkodra and Kosova. As in the south, their dialects (*Gegërisht/Gegnishte*) were quite distinct from one another and mark the self-distinguishing groups found in much of what we today associate with northern Albania, Montenegro, Novipazar, southern Serbia, Herzegovina, northern Macedonia, and all of Kosova. As *Toskë*, the internal variations of these communities were influenced by their exposure to neighboring groups with whom they traded (other *Gegë*, various Slavs, or Dalmatians). Likewise, the extent to which Ottoman state institutions infiltrated their region greatly shaped the dynamics of day-to-day community life.

It is this last issue of state intervention that needs further clarification. As noted throughout, there are significant differences in the level of state influence on Geg communities, especially in areas that were more or less impossible to reach by state bureaucracies. This left large numbers of a particular subcluster of *Gegë*, the *Malësorë* (sing. *Malësor*), or *Malisorlar* in the Ottoman language, who lived in the mountainous regions called *Malësi*, to develop independently of the rest of the western Balkans. In the *Malësi* there are additional geographic, cultural, and economic factors that contributed to an even more complex division of the region's population into small communities that Ottoman officials, European representatives reporting

back to their respective home offices, and itinerate Catholic priests assiduously documented.

While crude generalizations are often the assumed privilege of imperial officials mechanically labeling peasants part of a larger "tribal" group (*kabile*) or ethnicity (*millet*), officials operating in *Malësi* rarely failed to learn the local distinctions under which *Malësorë* themselves operated. When describing local events in the nineteenth century in the provinces of Kosova and Işkodra, Ottoman officials regularly made reference to the village, family/communal group (*fis*), or larger valley from which the principals came.[18] Of course, the terminology of the outside world used to identify the so-called tribal groups (appearing in Ottoman documents as *kabile*) was also at times employed to distinguish among separate communities frequenting regional market towns such as Gjakova/Yakova or Peja/Ipek/Peć.[19] In using these foreign terms, however, newly trained Ottoman officials clearly imported alien concepts from outside the region. In time, even the most insensitive official learned how to differentiate one group from another, dropping in the process all reference to ethnic groups such as "*Arnavut*" or even "*millet*" (religious sect) altogether. Ottomans with any local knowledge, therefore, knew there were no generic Albanian, Catholic, *Toskë/Gegë*, or *Malësorë* communities. Instead of resorting to inaccurate generalizations, they ended up adopting the local terminology in their reports.[20]

Much as with Ottoman administrative newcomers to Kosovar market towns, many travelers who wrote about the region faced head-on the realities of a complex social environment. The need to obtain a level of local knowledge became clear when problems arose that could be resolved only with careful appreciation for local political considerations. Informed visitors of the nineteenth century such as the Austro-German Albanologists and Italian Catholic priests who ministered to the vast area appreciated that it was necessary to invest time in order to gain local knowledge.[21] In this regard, priests sent on missionary work proved especially sensitive to these issues. Their reports left behind considerable ethnographic data that reveal how elaborate and dynamic local political, cultural, and economic life was in nineteenth-century *Malësi*. A report from Domenico Pasi on his experiences in the *Malësi* while on missionary duty is an invaluable example (Cordignano 1933).

In his ethnographic surveys, Pasi describes in considerable detail the contours of the region he associates with the port town Shkodër's immediate mountain districts, a key administrative and socioeconomic space that sat strategically on the border with Montenegro and the

Adriatic Sea. In describing the regional distinctions between areas further south of Shkodër, including the important Catholic enclave of Mirdita, Pasi breaks down the communities living throughout the mountain areas into "tribes" that in the "Malcija e Madhe" included the Hoti, Gruda, Kelmendi, Kastrati, and Shkreli (Cordignano 1933: 1: 124–125). While he leaves out other major subgroups that fill the Ottoman documents, including the Krasniqi and Gashi located to the southeast of these communities, Pasi's detailed catalog of local life in parts of the *Malësi*, nevertheless, highlights how extensive the interaction by Catholic clergy and government officials was at the time.

Among other details, Pasi describes the important subdivisions in these communities, illuminating the dynamic and contentious political environment of the area at a time when it was the borderland par excellence. In the Hoti region, for instance, Pasi notes that there are at least two smaller clusters of communities, self-identified as Hoti and the Traboina, which contributed to an often contentious political environment along the Montenegro-Ottoman frontier. Similarly, Pasi learned that to the east of Hoti, at least four separate communities come under the Kelmendi category—the Selce, the Vukli, the Nikçi, and the Boga—that needed to be differentiated.

As noted throughout Pasi's narrative, these are not uniformly organized communities that act as one in all circumstances. Throughout the tumultuous period of transition under study, factions within families that made up parts of, for instance, the Boga or Vukli *fis* vied for power with outside actors—other *Malësorë* groups, the Montenegrin state, the Ottoman administration, and merchants from Italy—as frontiers, administrations, or commercial relations with Istanbul changed. In such circumstances, Pasi witnessed important changes that subsequent histories reduced to primordial sectarian rivalries, a bureaucratic or professional sleight of hand that, in the process, neglected to situate the tensions between these communities in a regional context.

As he moved eastward into the lesser mountain range (Malësia e Vogel), Pasi noted that a very different kind of social organization existed. He pointed out that while the Shala district, like Hoti, was shared by at least two other groups—Shala and Gimaj—in Thethi, five distinct neighborhoods (*mahalle*) were identified in a way that could be considered self-contained communities. These designations were still not sufficient, however, to grasp fully the immediate power dynamics at play.[22] Within these subgroupings one finds communities under the direct management of locally elected leaders (*bayraktar,* or sometimes given in its Slavic form, *vojvoda*) who represent the interests of smaller, distinct communities in respect to their relations

with the Shala (a larger coalition of families or *fis*) and the outside world. Pasi's ethnography of a relatively small geographic region, in other words, shows that the links to the larger world were important but also varied, depending on the village group.

While this detail may seem a bit tedious for our generalizing tastes, these distinctions proved especially crucial in the last half of the nineteenth century. Without them, people could not properly "read" daily life, a conceptual blindness that today undermines the quality of scholarship on the Ottoman past. A case in point was the diplomacy surrounding the Ottoman-Russian war of 1875–1877 and its aftermath in the form of the San Stefano and Berlin treaties of 1878 discussed in Chapters 3 and 4. Unable to really confine or distinguish disputed territories along the ethnonational lines that Europe's major powers were increasingly using, conflict resolution proved especially difficult. As a consequence, local ambiguities shaped the way that Montenegro, Serbia, and the Ottoman Empire would territorially define themselves as a result of the war and perhaps more important, the way that *Toskë* organized politically in reaction to the 1877–1878 debacle discussed at length in Chapter 4.

In the end, the key to realizing a paradigmatic shift in the way we write the many Balkan stories is adopting a healthy skepticism of the terminology used to narrate the region's past. This in itself is not an innovation of course; for at least 20 years scholars have written about the conflicted, paradoxical, and often contradictory motivations of peoples living in the heterogeneous Austro-Hungarian, Prussian, and Russian empires (Confino 1997; King 2002; Martin 2001). What *Reinstating the Ottomans* offers that is different is a new set of tools that situate events in a broader Ottoman context. All too often ignored by historians writing from the perspective of the post-Ottoman world, it is the Ottoman setting that reveals the extent to which previous scholarship on the events in Belgrade in 1804, Morea in 1828, Prizren in 1878, or Macedonia in 1908 fails to consider alternative motivations behind people's actions. As I lay out in the next five chapters, it is the seemingly chaotic qualities of the empire's daily affairs that suggest that these Ottoman subjects did not operate exclusively under an essentialist ethnonational or sectarian register imposed on us after World War I. In other words, the lexicon scholars of the Balkans mobilize effectively disguises the internal complexities of daily Balkan life in the nineteenth century in order to make twentieth-century, post-Ottoman political claims and demands. Shedding light on these "hidden transcripts" requires returning the Ottomans to modern Balkan history.

1

Retrieving Historical Processes: Transitions to a Modern Story

Modern nationalist mythologies prove self-limiting in that they ignore counternarratives most scholars acknowledge exist. As elsewhere, western Balkan mythologies resorting to clichés that, for instance, assert that "Turks" were usurpers of a primordial Christian social order or agents who suppressed the nationalist yearnings of intact national peoples surrender the past to a spurious modernist foundational narrative (Wheatcroft 1993: 231–248). In the end, what remains is a resilient fallback story that perpetuates what so many now acknowledge is intellectually untenable: the essentialist claim of a primordial ethnonational community (Campbell 1998: 62; Tuastad 2003). Despite the acknowledged shortcomings of nationalist mythology, the dominant narrative of post-Ottoman historiography still insists that incommensurate cultures and not "common ground" are the foundations of modern societies in the Balkans (Green 2005). To many, this accounts for the region's rather bloody experience after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire (Stolcke 1995: 1–13).

In an effort to subvert these liberal assertions made at the conjuncture of new forms of state power initiating a "politics of difference" at the expense of hitherto functioning "mixed" polities (Burbank and Cooper 2010), we need to highlight the interactive dynamic that permitted expressions of "difference" in the western Balkans during Ottoman times. In this regard, by reinstating the Ottomans into the nationalist teleology, we may help complicate what is understood to be the diverse ambitions of Ottoman subjects and their descendants in the twenty-first century. Of course, this is not the first attempt at writing the Ottoman experience back into the larger Balkan story. Frustrated with the shallowness and often malicious tenor of much of the literature that covers the last years of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans, some thoughtful scholars have tried to right wrongs by

documenting the mass expulsion campaigns that led to the decimation of the Balkan Muslim populations (McCarthy 1995; Toumarkine 1995). In so doing, however, these scholars often submit to the same modernist reductions that contributed to the problem in the first place. For example, it is often forgotten that even the purported "guardians" of these peoples contributed to making policies of ethnic cleansing possible. While the international community encouraged states to correct their "ethnic" balance by the systematic expulsion of Muslim "Turks," the post-Ottoman Republic of Turkey, a major recipient of these expellees, also contributed to this twentieth-century history of cultural destruction of the Ottoman past.

As we are reminded by the latest revisionist innovations in the field, the Republic of Turkey signed agreements with not only Greece but also Bulgaria and Serbia/Yugoslavia to conduct "population exchanges." Ironically, by signing these "repatriation" agreements, Turkey actually assisted these new Balkan countries in cleansing their heterogeneous past (Clark 2007; Yildirim 2006: 31–44). In effect, the new states of Montenegro, Turkey, Serbia, Romania, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Albania, Kosovo, and Greece are products of, and participants in, conscious historical erasure. Not only would Muslims throughout the twentieth-century Balkans become targets of a cynical method of "resolving" nonexistent intracommunal conflicts, but the cultural heritage of the entire Ottoman period would face elision as a result as well.

As state policy, post-Ottoman "nations" continue to sever most of their cultural, socioeconomic, and institutional links to the Ottoman period. At times, this requires denying a multicultural history, inevitably leading to orgies of cultural destruction (Kiel 1990; Riedlmayer 2002). As a result of this strategic removal of the Ottoman past—the expulsion of the "Turks" (i.e., Muslims); the destruction of buildings; the changing of names of towns, families, and monuments; and the "purification" of languages—many in the region have accepted the conclusion that the Ottoman cultural, political, and economic infrastructure was indeed an "occupying," and thus foreign, entity (Jazexhi 2009). Such logic has powerful intuitive consequences on the way we write about the region's history: If Ottoman Muslims were "Turks" and thus "foreigners" by default, it becomes necessary to differentiate the indigenous from the alien, a deadly calculation made in the twentieth century with terrifying consequences for millions.[1]

Here lies the paradox of "modernity," a discursive horizon that is often not fully accounted for in the "corrective" scholarship on the Ottoman Empire. The less obvious consequence of this logic

validates politically motivated ideologues of the modern nation-state version of the past to circumvent the Ottoman era when writing the region's history. We can deal with them. The problem arises when we buy into the categorical fixity of certain "groups." According to the paradigm of "modernity," the history of "a people," be they Serbs, Bulgarians, Greeks, or Albanians, requires a definable set of criteria that excludes crucial details about the Ottoman Empire and its 600-year structural, cultural, and political legacy. The fact, for example, that people of all faiths coexisted relatively peacefully somehow fails to register when writing in terms that assume that some underlying ethnoreligious link supersedes context, contingency, and possibility. Ottoman subjects (especially those who converted to Islam) are thus, according to a logic attributed to "modernity," rendered temporally and spatially finite, rigidly circumscribed, and distinct in the region's history. This ostensibly erases a heterogeneous existence from a chronology that links modern Bulgarians, Greeks, Serbs, and Albanians to pre-Ottoman medieval states.

By establishing that there exists a countervailing logic of Ottoman flexibility, it is possible to reconsider how "diversity" directly impacted the lives of all the major and minor actors in the western Balkans. In this chapter, I explore these angles under the assumption that the commercial, cultural, and political elite of the region, as well as the putative "subaltern," have throughout the centuries negotiated with, and ultimately accommodated (or were accommodated by), the different needs of the empire. This capacity to tolerate difference is arguably what accounts for the empire's longevity (Finkel 2005).

At the heart of the long-term success of this political order was the fact that the empire's fortunes were shared by large numbers of peoples at any given time. As long as things went well for individual clusters of people who shared temporary interests, the empire served as an invaluable vehicle for local power, fortune, and protection. If things did not go well, people coalesced in ways that sometimes applied direct pressure on the larger state to do something about it. This was true from the very beginning of the Ottoman enterprise in the early fourteenth century and, as evidenced by the Macedonian revolts of 1908, remained a fact until the very end. This dynamic give-and-take across existing communal lines is rarely acknowledged in the literature today.

Breaking Out from under the State

The modern state and the myths of the nation have conveniently limited the parameters of the state's subjects to ethnolinguistic

(i.e., ethnonational) and religious associations. The emergence of autocephalous factions of the Eastern Orthodox Church has been especially important in drawing the parameters of these modern associations. Greeks can be Greeks only because of their church. Likewise, Bulgarians and Serbs are associated first by their "national" church and the vernacular used in its ceremonies. It is noted, however, that the subsequent use of this logic to identify and explain historical processes and the institutions that emerged creates a number of problems when attempting to interpret the medieval and early modern history of the Balkans (Malcolm 1998: 41–57). For one, reading "society" in the narrow terms of the post-Ottoman world threatens to reify the idea that Ottoman society was divided neatly along sectarian, and thus ethnic, lines. As a result, any suggestion of a more complicated set of interactions taking place, as is often evident when reading the archival material, leaves one with a limited set of descriptive tools to use. Registering the very act of engaging the "other," in other words, potentially handcuffs the modernist narrative to an act of qualifying every observation to retain some rhetorical connection with the reader informed by a twentieth-century logic.

Examples of this kind of representation of Balkan history are ubiquitous in the region's scholarship. Every history of say Montenegro or Serbia must make reference to "Montenegrins" or "Serbs" as a historical continuity, linked to early states such as that of Duklja, created out of primordial family communes or *zadruga*, who forged quasi-autonomous relations with the Byzantine Empire based further to the east (Obolensky 1971: 220–221). These events taking place as early as the twelfth century are supposed to have a primordial ethnographic value that supersedes any understanding of modern Montenegrin and Serbian society (and political claims to these territories and their inhabitants) as determined by 600 years of Ottoman rule. Considering that even "older" Balkan peoples, Albanians, for instance, claim direct links to the Illyrian inhabitants of the Balkans who predate the Slavic invasions of the sixth century. For their part, modern Greeks associate with peoples who made up the ancient city-states of Hellas. The Ottoman thus period constitutes a rupture to the historical continuity reflexively asserted in much of the post-Ottoman scholarship.[2]

A popular tactic in this scholarship that works in the service of the modern state's epistemological claims and tries to reaffirm these tropes of primordial continuity is to evoke the presence of various *millet* in Ottoman state documentation.[3] The function of the term *millet*, incorrectly assumed to represent well-defined ethnonational groups

exclusively, was actually modified (and expanded) in this 1800–1875 period to help reformulate the changing parameters of community in the empire (Braude 1982; Skendi 1982). Ultimately, these *millet(s)*—Vlach, Greek, Serb, Bulgarian, and Muslim—emphasized certain unifying qualities of people that the government in Istanbul promoted to ensure their collective loyalty.[4]

As this book argues throughout, the challenge to essentialist assertions about the function of ethnic associations is that they are never fully containable within the narrow parameters that politicians employ today.[5] The problem is that one must first convincingly justify why rewriting the Ottoman Empire's role beyond this discussion is necessary. In this chapter, I do this by suggesting that contemporary twentieth-century politics can be partially subverted by *re-presenting* a chronology of events leading to the mid-nineteenth century with special attention paid to framing and highlighting specific nuances of Ottoman life. In this manner, the western Balkans will prove not just to be a destination for an expansionist political order or evangelical religious cult but also a fundamental cultural, social, and political reservoir, one that actually proved strategically central to the rapid expansion of the empire in the first period (1300–1453) and then in what I see as the transitional era—1780–1838—that marked the replacement of one form of governance (the *ayanlık/bayraktarlık*) with a "modern" bureaucratic state.[6]

In seeing the western Balkans as central to the future success (and hence survival) of the Ottoman Empire, the argument can begin to be made that the experience of expansion was one that was shared and intimately part of the Balkan story. This means that western Balkan history and Ottoman history are intertwined, and the social, cultural, and economic relations that relationship produced make it impossible to justify any narrative that distinguishes one from the other. Put differently, the past does not mirror the present's strategic manipulation of identity politics; in the Ottoman western Balkans, there are reasons for not categorically distinguishing indigenous from immigrant, rich from poor, and urbanite from peasant at some important level of abstraction; they all contributed to the larger world that they shared as Ottomans.

Paradigmatic Barriers

What is ultimately challenged here is a narrative that privileges a particularized reading of power. In many ways, these narratives of power—the power to represent, the power to marginalize, and the

power to document—rely on essentialist notions of identity developed in the context of twentieth-century state-building projects. As is often clear when reading the state-sanctioned historiography, scholars project backward the exploitative use of present-day ethnic politics. As a result, the day-to-day operations of an empire that lasted 600 years has become a science of persecution and ethnic strife; a mirror image, in other words, of the society from which the history was written. Beyond the function of setting neat lines of distinction between an "us and them," however, the literature also trains us to read how the generic, let us say "Turk," effectively ruled the Balkans at the expense of other, already well-formulated and self-articulating ethnic groups (Stavrianos 1958). Ottoman expansion, in this logic, constituted an enterprise fraught with clear-cut religious chauvinism, an instrumental brutality of "occupation" that did not respect standards of law putatively claimed universal in the "civilized" West.

Such tropes have remained with us today. Specific to the Balkans, in especially the popular histories most widely read by the public, one constantly finds references to parts of the region being the "national heartland" of "ancient peoples" as well as sitting on the frontier between "clashing civilizations" (Di Lellio 2009). This reductionism meant to explain why the agents of history living in these "zones of conflict" either succeed in "liberating" themselves or suffer under "Turkish" oppression inevitably gravitates to the topic of Islam.

Since the nineteenth century, observers asserted that the very presence of Muslims makes Balkans' history distinct and somewhat "non-European." Accordingly, the Balkans has been in a perpetual conflict with the personalized "Islam," which is, unlike the other faiths of Europe, an unwelcome import, an aberration from an otherwise "Judeo-Christian" world embellished with an emerging secularist value system (Asad 2003). At one level, the thrust of this current chapter questions whether this generic depiction of "Islam" really helps us understand the Balkans today. After all, contemporary observers cannot help but acknowledge that Albanians, Greeks, and South Slavs straddle all three of the major "civilization fault lines" (e.g., various sects of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam), a concession that confuses somewhat the neat logic of the "ancient hatreds" paradigm that assumes tension based on religious difference. Historicizing an interactive, mutually beneficial legacy may prove useful.

It is now well established that there existed in every corner of the Ottoman Balkans multidenominational communities confessing to various sects of Islam, Judaism, and Christianity (Mazower 2002: 54–76; Wachtel 2008). As a result, it is objectively possible to

demonstrate that despite the empire's heterogeneous reality, its entire 600-year history in the Balkans was not beset with perpetual strife. But simply trying to demonstrate that people cohabitated may also be reinforcing the modernist tropes of fixed identity claims. As is increasingly explained to readers by scholars intently wishing to challenge these colonial-era postulations, religion, language, or "ethnicity" was not always the primary factor determining a person's sense of community in complex societies (Mishkova 2002). In the Ottoman context, multiconfessional communities and even families were the norm; how people understood what kind of possibilities this offered them outside "fighting for separation" is a potential new model for rethinking the modern world (Hodgson 1993: 126–170). Perhaps the best way to demonstrate this is to explain why the Ottoman Empire, even from its very origins in the late thirteenth century, remained amenable to change.

To avoid reifying modern strategies of historical revision that contradict this, it is crucial to highlight the variables involved in consolidating power in the Ottoman Balkans from the fourteenth century onward. The foundation of the short-lived political dynasty by the Balšići family in the middle of the fourteenth century along the southern Dalmatian coast is a good example of the kind of methodological issues we must address. Of culturally ambiguous origins themselves, the larger population living along the coast was neither entirely Slavic nor Orthodox Christian when the Balšići took over in the 1360s (Pasinović 2005: 13).[7] Despite this, scholarship has often used the documents produced by these political orders to claim modern ethnic links. The problem is the Balšići's did not use one language in official documentation. In each of their respective documentary records, the use of Latin, Church Slavonic, and other regional bureaucratic languages suggests any range of possible "ethnic" affiliations.

For this reason alone then, we must challenge a logic that identifies the use of a language in a short-lived state's bureaucracy as evidence that the peoples living under such a regime shared any ethnic affiliation with that state's leadership. Similarly, the "ethnicity" of the dynasty's patriarch competing over these territories proves hard to identify. In the case of southern Dalmatia in the 1360s, no matter what the Balšići were "ethnically" (it is disputed as to whether their origins were Albanian, Slavic, Norman, Vlach, or a combination of some or all of these), they clearly were not natives to the entire region over which they ruled. In that sense, they inherited some parts of the western Balkan populations that were, it could be claimed today,

"ethnically alien" to the regime in power (Fine 1994: 358–359). In this regard, it seems unlikely that the dynasty imposed a "national" culture on its diverse population.

This becomes especially problematic when considering the precarious nature of power, authority, and hence subject loyalty. What do we do, if we want to try to avoid using anachronisms from the twentieth century, with the fact that the medieval dynasties so crucial to modern historians linking the pre-Ottoman period to the present lasted for relatively short periods of time? This means, the "lands" over which one coalition of families ruled were constantly changing hands, rendering the modern historical claims to that territory clumsy and contradictory.

More sophisticated, comparative approaches to studying the empire today largely assert that polities such as the Ottomans and their Balkan/Byzantine predecessors "rented" the job of administering the domains to surrogates. This means that no territory was ruled to reflect any dominant culture. Therefore, the heroic characters of the Nemanjići dynasty or Skanderbeg betray the numerous ambiguities surrounding both their relationship with the Ottomans (members of their family, and possibly dynastic representatives themselves, fought on the side of the coalition armies associated with the Ottomans) and their assumed "Serbian," "Montenegrin," or "Albanian" heritage (Jens-Schmitt 2001; Malcolm 1998; Živković 1989: 1: 340). The many men who actually administered the economic and political life of these regions on the behalf of the Ottomans, Venetians, or Maygars were more often than not culturally distinct from the "state" that claimed sovereignty over their farmlands and forests. In other words, depending on the context, peasants in medieval Kosovo, for example, are inaccurately claimed today as Serbs, Turks, Albanians, Montenegrins, Macedonians, or Bulgarians on the basis of finite administrations.[8] The very fact that these peasants and their lords most likely had little to no contact with the fleeting regimes under which they temporarily lived means that there are some significant flaws in the way we consider the possible range of cultural, economic, and political identities available to them.

Upsetting the Medieval Cradle and Ottoman Settings

For most of the medieval inhabitants of the Balkans—both the peasants and the hired men toiling in mines and occasionally fighting battles on behalf of competing political leaders—a relationship with the state, its dynastic politics, and the institutions that gave these

states their "legitimacy," namely, the churches and their clergy, was at best distant. The peasant masses most likely spoke different languages than their overlords and displayed a plethora of cultural variation within the temporary boundaries of a principality (Sugar 1992: 77–78). In this regard, the disjunction between medieval subject and state is crucial: The "people," today claimed as part of a larger national consciousness, were far less culturally impacted by those who ran the state than is commonly assumed. At most, peasants would adopt the outer shell of cultural transformation by changing their names and becoming tax-paying subjects of the religious patriarch ruling their homeland at the time. Moreover, it is clear that locals continued to practice locally unique traditions that travelers still in the twentieth century identified in some of the more isolated villages in the region (Durham 1904, 1909, 1928; Lane 1922: 41–57). This capacity to both adapt to new cultural paradigms imposed by every new regime and translate these new influences through their indigenous culture is not unique to the Balkans, of course, but a phenomenon observed throughout the world (Puri 2004: 69).

Peoples' manifest interactions with power (the institutions that disseminate forms of power are mitigated by constantly shifting articulations of collective affiliation) often directly contradicted the symbolic acts of newly established political authority. As demonstrated in cases as far away as India, many indigenous people have proven capable of entering newly established circles of power by way of marriage alliances, military service, or joining the clergy, but they still retain their cultural autonomy (Cohn 1987). In the late Byzantine era, people whom we call today Albanians, Greeks, Vlachs, and Slavs shared a place in that society not on the basis of "belonging to different nations" but because of their class status, their association with the church, or the kind of authority they had over labor power. For their part, "Serbian" or "Bulgarian" churches running autonomously from Constantinople sanctioned the social hierarchies in Kosovo and Macedonia that empowered the rulers through complicated networks of patronage and negotiation because, in this period, the church was the vehicle for disseminating a message of spiritual and political subordination (Fine 1994: 314–321). Taking this into account, it is anachronistic, for instance, to call the medieval Dušan enterprise (1331–1355) an ethnic Serb state, with all the modern associations that freight this term. Perhaps a better way of understanding the medieval period is to characterize Dušan's operation as a state that administered a multitiered society composed of culturally "hybrid"

peoples absorbed in a documented sense by a church administered by clergy loyal to a ruler.[9]

As already discussed, one of the problems with telling any story of the Balkan past is the nature of the documents. Just because a regional dynasty leaves a documentary record behind in a language associated with a present-day state, it should not lead us to assume that the people living under that regime are similarly linked to the modern state. Over a thousand-year history of the Balkans, the fact that the liturgy and administration of the "flock" would be conducted in southern Slavic, Latin, ancient Greek, or Arabic did not mean that the subjects of these governmental or spiritual proceedings were themselves "ethnically" unambiguous. A shift in power in medieval societies resulted neither in the complete subordination of a population nor in the wholesale expulsion of one group for the benefit of another.

This last point is important for there seems to be a double standard at work in much of the historiography. In principle, nationalist scholars today do not make claims about the Ottoman Empire linking its subjects with a primordial ethnicity. Bulgarians, Serbs, and Greeks who lived continuously as a self-identified group cannot be confused—despite the introduction of a 600-year-old literary, legal, and religious legacy—with Turkey by way of the Ottoman Empire. And yet, this argument is not made for the period before the Ottoman Empire moved into the Balkans by the end of the fourteenth century. Why then the assertion that in Dušan-controlled territories, in most cases a period that lasted less than a generation, an ethnically and culturally "Serb people" was created out of the majority of the region's population? Put differently, if we know better than to suggest that all subjects of Ottoman sultans were to become ethnic "Turks" over 600 years of rule, why do we talk in terms of ancient Serbian, Bulgarian, or Albanian homelands in medieval Europe?[10] A more careful analysis of early Ottoman expansion into the western Balkans could suggest a new set of associations and possibilities that completely reanimates how we can talk about diversity and the larger Ottoman role in the Balkans' modernities.

The adaptability of local populations is quite clear when we study the transition period from Tsar Stefan's reign to the emergence of an Ottoman government in the late fourteenth century. As scholars of the period have noted, a plethora of Maygar, Slav, Albanian, Bulgar, and Vlach "lords and vassals" were given tracts of land by the new Ottoman rulers to help with tax collection. As the Ottoman state sought to harness the productive potential of its newly captured

territories, it utilized the time-honored principles of governance that ensured full integration of the local population with no threat of violence and, significantly, no threat of forced conversion (Vryonis 1990: 185–216).

The historian Halil Inalcık explains the dynamism of this early Ottoman enterprise as a process of *istimâlet* (literally securing another's goodwill or loyalty). By this he meant that the way the emerging frontier polity operated strategically blurred the lines between "Christians" and "Muslims." Ostensibly, the Ottoman Empire created a form of cultural symbiosis to facilitate expanding into former Byzantine lands (Inalcık 1991: 408–410). These were policies of integration still not fully appreciated for just how they helped authorities administer regions as varied as the western Balkans.

At the heart of Ottoman success in the Balkans was a set of fundamental policies vis-à-vis "conquered" peoples that weighted religious affiliations in a new way. Of particular interest are the practices of *aman* (demonstrating mercy to the defeated) and ensuring the safety of Christians and Jews.[11] Through these long-used policies, the Ottomans were successful in recruiting future allies from within opposing ruling families in all the areas that they eventually integrated into the empire. While Inalcık certainly had his own ideological agenda for reinforcing the mythology of the modern Republic of Turkey, he successfully argued that the image of the raiding "Turkish hoards"—while perhaps apt for the invading Mongols of an earlier era—cannot be sustained in the historic record. It is important, however, to remain conscious of the motivations behind the tropes that the turn-of-the-century journalist and the national historian today repeatedly evoke. As Heath Lowry has perhaps most succinctly put it:

> [This] description of the Ottoman state as one formed from a heterogeneous symbiosis...is not a designation which is likely to attract many adherents among either contemporary Balkan or Turkish historians. Both groups (due to their retrospective reading of history) would prefer to think of the Ottoman as "modern" Turks. That is, Balkan nationalists are fixated on their view of the conquering Turk with sword in hand presenting their hapless Christian victims with the choice of "conversion or death," rather than one in which a significant portion of the traditional ruling class was co-opted into the Ottoman elite; whereas, today's Turks...want to cling to the idea that somehow the Ottoman polity was a purely Turkish creation, that is, a state whose essence was Turkishness wrapped in an Islamic veneer. (Lowry 2003: 133)

This approach to ruling peoples of different faiths undermines the hysterical assertions levied against the past in the modern literature. Perhaps more important, however, in the process of centuries of rule under a regime in which the right to worship as a non-Muslim was guaranteed, such a system was predicated on forms of land management that encouraged communities to remain on their traditional lands to continue to produce revenue. In return, these peoples could practice their faiths as determined by their traditional religious leadership. One of the consequences of such an arrangement was the interaction between Ottoman Muslims and indigenous non-Muslim communities, leading to a sort of cultural, linguistic, and theological fusion.[12]

It is often ignored that what made this pre-Ottoman Balkan region both culturally vibrant and economically attractive to fourteenth-century Ottomans was precisely the reason for the development of the region's long history of cultural diversity in the first place: the mineral-rich land and commercially productive towns built around them. As a result, these communities consistently attracted waves of migrations, which in their own right blurred the cultural identity of the inhabitants. In this context, the Ottoman state (and its Venetian rivals from the west) had specifically coordinated its military might toward capturing and ruling the region in the most effective way. This meant that, like the Roman, Norman, Slavic, and Venetian rulers before the Ottomans, any "foreign" administrative power in the western Balkans needed to modify its ambitions to mollify a local population that was vital to the functioning of the region's lucrative economy (Kafadar 1995).

Remaining open to the idea that the early Ottomans had neither the capacity to subjugate the Balkans physically nor the desire to disrupt local economic production, it is clear that tolerance, not intolerance, was more likely the order of the day between the new leaders and the inhabitants of the region. As none of the medieval empires was composed of sharply defined "ethnic" groups in the first place, the mode of transition and long-term incorporation into the Ottoman sphere of influence was accommodation and co-optation, which resulted in more social and cultural exchange, not less. It was, pure and simple, not economically viable to expel a local population expected to produce the tax revenues for the state. As a result, Ottoman governors permitted the inhabitants to practice their faith, speak in their languages, and, in time, increasingly oversee the integration of new cultural and traditional practices that exposure to the rest of the Ottoman world made possible.

On the basis of this early Ottoman phase of incorporating the Balkans into the state's administrative control, it is reasonable to conclude that late medieval states were not created by massive "ethnic cleansing" projects that supplanted the native populations with colonizers.[13] On the contrary, the same landed elite who ruled Kosovo prior to the Dušan period ruled in alliance with the new sovereign and for the most part survived after the conquest of Kosovo by the Ottomans (Stavrides 2001). In other words, the Ottomans of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were not the marauding forces that were witnessed in the Balkans in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Inalcık 1954).

The fact that so many peasants either remained on their land or integrated into the Ottoman state elite, what Lowry (2003: 115–130) has called Ottoman syncretism, immediately suggests that culturally, the western Balkans had been and would remain heterogeneous. Evidence of this can be easily gleaned today from archival records in which it is made clear that many medieval religious institutions remained intact and continued to function as churches throughout the entire Ottoman period of rule.[14] The fact that, for example, large numbers of Orthodox churches from the height of Tsar Dušan's reign remained active throughout the Ottoman period and were used for generations as places of worship serves as a strong counterargument to historians bent on labeling the Ottoman experience as one of utter cultural darkness or endless persecution of Christians. At the same time, it is important not to assume that the presence of churches associated with one dynasty or another means that the region was culturally homogeneous prior to the Ottoman arrival (Vryonis 1986: 358–360). Ultimately, what the existence of medieval structures should demonstrate is a cultural vibrancy that helps us talk about, for instance, Islam today in the Balkans not as a "foreign" faith but as one that since the eighth century informed the spiritual lives of large areas of the peninsula, and one that has as much claim to being indigenous in the region as any other creed (Clayer 1990, 1994; Norris 1993: 2–13).

Much of the grassroots success of the Ottomans came when itinerate mystics were introduced into the region (Curry 2010). Sufi mystical orders in particular thrived in the western Balkans, leading to moments of a significant number of conversions in local communities as these new creeds appealed to the spiritual needs and political ambitions of locals (Kristić 2009). In this respect, the story of the religious experience of Ottoman "occupation" needs to be tempered with the realization that it was not a state policy per se to convert people; conversions did of course happen, but for reasons

that reflect individual and communal factors as much as religious politics (Bulliet 1990).[15]

At the heart of these blurred lines between past practices and the integration of “Islam” into the lives of the people of the Balkans—whether we are considering conversions per se, or negotiating coexistence with neighbors who became Muslims—is the role of Muslim mysticism (Sufism). The unorthodox practices and messages associated with the Sufi movements (*tariqat/tekke*) prevalent in the region—Baktashiyya, Halvetiyya, Qadriyya, Mawlawiyya, Naqshabandiyya, Rafi’iya—attest to how conversion throughout the centuries can perhaps best be understood by the growth of Islamic institutions in urban areas. In the specific case of Kosovo, already by 1485 the three largest towns with significant pre-Ottoman Christian populations had become majority Muslim. This was largely due to the spiritualism of regional sages who traveled the region widely and were able to communicate the underlying spiritual dualism of so many who had adopted foreign religious identities (i.e., Orthodox Christian) during the previous era. As evidenced by the rich libraries once attached to the now-destroyed Sufi lodges throughout Kosovo and Bosnia, many of these men accumulated Persian, Ottoman, and Arabic manuscripts and created the foundations of new expressions of a uniquely local spirituality crucial for political and commercial leaders throughout the larger Balkans well into the Yugoslav era.[16]

This brief overview serves to suggest another approach to reading and analyzing events of the modern era covered in depth in this book: Constantly modifying cultural and confessional affiliations to adjust to the transformations in the larger world, people in even seemingly isolated corners of the empire could find spiritual orders with cosmopolitan pretensions and transregional links. Dervish Hasani of Rahovec, for instance, a member of the Halveti *tariqa* founded in 1680, is the author of the oldest surviving example of a genre of Albanian literature called *Aljamiado/Bejtexhinj* (Elsie 1999: 36–39). As suggested by the widespread dissemination of *divan* poetry that characterized this genre of local spiritualism, Kosovo’s population invested heavily in linking with the Turkish, Persian, and Arabic worlds (Pirraku 1980). The western Balkans, in other words, was one of many centers linking the early modern Islamic, Ottoman, southeast European worlds. In this larger context, the Ottoman Empire continued to shape and be shaped by events well beyond its borders because so many of its own were intimately immersed in the affairs of the world.

While severely challenged (and in many ways surpassed) with the rise of Atlantic Ocean powers, the Ottoman state would survive the traumas of sectarian war with the Safavid Empire and the development of an expansionist Romanov dynasty to the north.[17] In the latter part of the eighteenth century, the empire's many internal shifts translated into yet another period of adjustment. The following century was shaped by this period of reforms known as the *Nizam-i Cedid* and then *Tanzimat* (Dumont 1989: 459–522). I suggest that looking at these periods from the perspective of the western Balkans will offer new insights into the intersecting forces not uniquely centered in Istanbul. In addition, by looking at the larger phenomenon of modernization from the perspective of the western Balkans, it becomes clear that many of the changes in the nineteenth century were specifically the product of local ambitions that expanded beyond their home districts. While rarely connected, it will be the rise of men such as Kara Mahmud Bushati of Shkodër, Mehmed Ali of Kavala, Ali Pasha of Tepedelen, Rhigas Velestinlis of Morea, Osman Paşvanoğlu of Vidin, all contemporaries of Napoleon and Metternich, that transformed their respective societies and, in various ways, introduced a new era of bureaucracy crucial to the modernization of the world at large (Bushati 1998; Fahmy 2008; Gradeva 2007; Zens 2002).

Revisiting the Ayan and the Politics of Local Alliances

Ever since the Ottomans arrived, their strategies to integrate the western Balkans relied on forming loose coalitions with the semi-autonomous polities that had long resisted direct rule under earlier Byzantine-era regimes. Through these local alliances, the Ottomans were able to develop a cost-efficient system of revenue collection and securing military support (Stavrides 2001: 41–53). For much of the time, it was indigenous political and commercial entrepreneurs who successfully cultivated the lucrative relationships with the larger Ottoman world. Dynasties created from these alliances made stakeholders out of many western Balkan communities, integrating, as a result, the larger region through a well-regulated system that rewarded initiative as well as disciplined this ambition with nonviolent strategies.

The history of how these local allies became crucial to the Ottoman Empire (or other emerging early modern states) is a fascinating study of opportunism and the manipulation of local conflicts. For example, many a local dynasty rose through the ranks by actually instigating trouble for the Ottoman state, forcing the empire's representatives to

negotiate (and then co-opt through lucrative offers of government promotion) or enact violent suppression. The long-term Ottoman success was predicated on minimizing the latter.

Some of the most successful ways of placating local troublemakers was co-opting them. Appointed as local governors, these erstwhile political and commercial outsiders were given extensive responsibilities that extended from revenue collection (always at established rates of extraction set by Istanbul) to maintaining law and order (Altınay 2001; Quataert 2000: 89–109). As even the most ardent manipulator of the Ottoman-cum-historic-oppressor trope will concede, in this setting, a refined policy of "farming" out disciplinary responsibilities depended on the actual recognized capacity of these partners to effectively lead their constituencies. In other words, the coalition of local leaders most capable of producing results seemed to find their ways to the top. As such, for much of Ottoman history, the very diversity that challenges the modern state proved to be a cost-efficient resource to ensure productivity and general stability in distant lands (Anastasopoulos 2002: 73–88; Özkaya 1994). Among those *ayans* securing the role of oversight in the Balkans, we study in particular the case of Ali Pasha of Tepedelen/Tepelana, whose ascendancy straddles the transitional period between the old system that cultivated local leaders such as Ali Pasha and the new one that tried to concentrate power in Istanbul and the government's bureaucracy.

In 1787, the Ottoman government appointed Ali Pasha as governor of his *sancak* (county) of origin, Yanya (Ioannina/Janina/Yanina), after he proved himself indispensable when subduing local troublemakers. Over the next decade, Ali Pasha proved to have an unlimited resource of ambition and skill. He established himself as a useful local ally to the Ottomans as they fought with the regional Adriatic power of the time, Venice, as well as the occasionally rebellious *bayraktar* of Shkodër, Işkodralı Mahmut Pasha Bushati (henceforth Bushati), and various local "Albanian" bandits, such as Matlı Osman (Anscombe 2006). In the process, Ali Pasha effectively carved out a niche not only for the Ottoman Sultan in territories along the disputed Dalmatian coast but also in his home region of Yanya where he expanded his family's commercial and governmental influence.[18]

The fusion of local commercial interests and that of the Ottoman-appointed *ayan* reveals the underlying power calculus that had worked for centuries (Naçi 1964). The entire Adriatic coastline and much of the hinterland in *Toskalık* and *Gegelik* were zones of such interaction. Where this "borderland" dynamic fuses with our greater concerns

about indigenous power interfacing with the larger western Balkans and the Ottoman Empire is with the rise of Napoleon. While the story has been retold enough to largely skip over here (Cole 2008), one important factor about Napoleon's ascendancy is relevant to the larger argument of this book.

To pay for his expansionism (and to feed his population), Napoleon (and his rivals elsewhere in Europe) began to rely on private banks. This reliance on private sources of specie forever transformed the way Europe and, by extension, the Ottomans managed their affairs (Clay 2000: 2–14). While Napoleon, the British, and later the United States developed a dependent relationship with private capital and publicly traded companies that colonized lucrative corners of the world to produce the cash crops increasingly coveted in Europe—sugar, tobacco, cotton, wheat, opium—these private enterprises grew accustomed to relying on puppet states to enforce globally their commercial treaties and exploitative labor regimes. It is at this juncture that Napoleon's needs as an indebted autocrat (food and gold) and state-less capitalists fused in the eastern Mediterranean. The marriage led to the first direct confrontation between European private money, its surrogate state of choice (the modernizing Napoleon army), and the Ottoman Empire.

As provocatively argued by Gran (1998), Europe's purported ascendancy in the world was not an inevitability. While much of Europe languished in poverty, internal strife, and indebtedness, for instance, the eastern Mediterranean throughout the eighteenth century thrived. In this regard, I suggest that there is a linkage between Napoleon's early expansionist agendas and this dynamism to France's south and east. The prosperity of Egypt and North Africa in general proved enticing enough to start Napoleon on a long path of first involving France in the daily affairs and intrigues of Mamluk Egypt and ultimately the direct occupation of North Africa. While we generally think that Napoleon invaded a "backward" "oriental" Egypt and overwhelmed the Mamluk dynasties in charge, in reality his invasion was intimately tied to local allies with whom he schemed to share the prize of Egyptian wealth. The point that I am making is to return the Ottoman/local Egyptian context to a larger phenomenon that our eurocentrism so easily ignores.

Most important for our purposes here, the trauma caused by Napoleon's near-conquest of non-Ottoman Europe inspired a new era of cooperation among continental powers and Britain. What chronology often supplants at this point is the curious history of the Ionian Republic, a spin-off of these diplomatic reorderings, just off the coast

of Ottoman Epirus. In this story we see the introduction of a mobilized Russia into the affairs of Ottoman subjects and quite possibly the necessary empowerment of the local *ayan*, Ali Pasha, in an effort to shift the fortunes of other states with ties to private banks (Bank of England) that would begin a rapid process of monetarization with fiat currency. Indeed, Russia would become more aggressively a player in local politics, first by co-opting the Pan-Slavism emerging in Croatia and then openly challenging the authority of the *Rum* Patriarch in respect to the interests of Balkan Orthodox Christians. Russia even offered money to willing local Muslim leaders.[19] At the same time, France and Britain became so entrenched in local affairs that their imperial ambitions completely shifted.

"Europe" Encroaches on Epirus

Russia's policy shift toward the Balkans ultimately forced the Ottoman state (and the until now "Atlantic" powers) to translate their long-proven interests in constantly reorganizing and streamlining their revenue-collection techniques to a more general process of economic, bureaucratic, and military reform (Genç 2000). This ultimately translated into what historians have called the *Nizam-i Cedid,* overseen first by Selim III and then by his cousin Mahmut II (Zürcher 1997: 24–35). While trying to reform the efficiency of the state, Russian (and French and British) expansion into the western Balkans increased the value of local stakeholders such as Ali Pasha. For his part, the rise of new opportunities created by international crisis ("Eastern Question") gave Ali Pasha new leverage vis-à-vis the Ottomans as well as opened channels of expansion that could have potentially made his Yanya-based government the most powerful state in the eastern Mediterranean (Ibrahim Manzour 1827).

As local surrogates of the empire such as Ali Pasha—and the equally spectacular case of Mehmet Ali Pasha in Egypt (both of *Toskëri* origin)—grew increasingly autonomous, the Ottomans and their imperialist neighbors had to adapt.[20] Contending with such potential threats (Ali Pasha remained loyal to the Ottoman dynasty, as did his sons who were appointed to important administrative roles in Morea, Delvina, Ohrid, Avolona/Vlora, and Tırhala/Trikala) required significant institutional reorganization (Skiotis 1976: 97–109). In the process of such modifications, a new philosophy of managing the western Balkans took form. The first stages of these efforts were diplomatic in nature. Ali Pasha had successfully eliminated on behalf of the Ottoman state the threats of Bushati in Shkodër as well as

quelled scattered local uprisings throughout Epirus. What animated these local disturbances was the rise of Napoleon in the Adriatic at Venetian expense.[21]

As long as Napoleon constituted the primary external threat to the larger region's stability, Ali Pasha would retain his value. Highlighting this were the larger diplomatic efforts that the Ottomans initiated with the Russians, who were recruited by the *Rum* Patriarch in Istanbul to help ensure Rumeli (Ottoman Balkans) would remain out of Napoleon's hands. It is at this point that the focus of the emerging global political and financial order turned to the Ionian Islands; the creation of a new protectorate would serve as the model for future interactions among local surrogates, outside powers, and the Ottomans in the western Balkans.

The Sublime Porte forged an alliance with Russia to confront France (1799–1807), whose designs in Egypt along with its expansion into the Adriatic forced Ottomans to shift strategies. As a result, a joint Russian–Ottoman fleet occupied the Ionian Islands in March 1799. The formation of this alliance had immediate consequences for Ali Pasha. At the time of the initial arrival of the flotilla, Russians and Ottomans specifically barred Ali Pasha from intervening in the affairs of the offshore islands. Among other things, they refused to allow him to send troops to help break the defenses of Corfu in apparent fear that he could "win the hearts of the people" (Şakul 2009: 256 n.9). This changed however with the creation from 1800 to 1807 of the Republic of the Seven United Islands (Corfu, Paxos, Leucada, Cephalonia, Ithaca, Zante, and Cythera). The islands would retain a formal relationship of vassalage to the Ottoman state, modeled after the Republic of Ragusa (Dubrovnik), while making the region under which Ali proved supreme a de facto frontier. This required an Ottoman frontier policy that aimed to create a buffer protectorate, much as Ragusa and Krajina had historically served, to keep in check both potential French aggression and Russian machinations. Such a protectorate seemed especially necessary as the Russian Tsar's assassination on March 24, 1801, resulted in an aggressive shift in Russian policies. About 10,000, mostly locally recruited, troops ended up on Corfu, in turn transforming Ottoman strategies and, by default, the role played by Ali Pasha.

According to the 1799 agreement, the Russians had the responsibility of protecting the Islands Republic but the Ottomans retained a special relationship, as it had with Ragusa and later Wallachia, Serbia (Belgrade), and Montenegro (Panaite 2000: 155, 472–473). As a "buffer protectorate," the Ionian Islands were intended to keep the

Ottoman mainland insulated from the larger shifts in Mediterranean affairs. At this point, Ali Pasha gained considerable leverage, in so far as he could choose to either mobilize his forces to wreak havoc on these plans or serve as a key ally in supporting them. In an attempt to placate Ali Pasha as well as link his interests to the fortunes of the project, the Russians and Ottomans gave him the responsibility of provisioning the islands as well the right to formally occupy four towns facing Corfu—Vonitsa, Butrint, Parga, and Preveza.[22] As a consequence of this sudden heightened importance of his role in the larger diplomatic scheme of things, evidence suggests that Ali Pasha pushed the envelope of his patrons' tolerance.

Fully aware that food security was crucial for the Ionian Republic, Ali Pasha exploited his leverage over the Russian-paid troops based in Corfu and Ottoman officials in far-off Salonika and Istanbul by making a classic power grab. Ali Pasha extended his regional influence on behalf of the Ottoman state by entering into local alliances and openly persecuting previously autonomous communities among the Tsamides (Çam) in Suli and Himara (Stathis 2007). In light of the Janissary uprisings in Belgrade and local riots throughout Morea, Istanbul tolerated Ali Pasha's conquest because the Sultan's advisors felt that a certain security was ensured by his taking these territories. Istanbul recognized his moves as the act of a loyalist and duly rewarded him for these "services" by formally recognizing him as governor of these extended lands. Moreover, the Ottoman state translated his police actions in the Adriatic highlands—and often rough treatment of locals in the crucial areas off the coast of Corfu—into new *iltizam* (tax farm) that would further enrich him and his growing entourage of allies.[23]

The formula applied by both Ali Pasha and the Ottoman state is crucial: Create problems too expensive to resolve in any other way than asking the source of the problem to refrain by way of rewards. Ali Pasha capitalized on the volatility of this crucial period, and in doing so he expanded his state to the extent that it became a veritable superpower in the region. Following the trajectory of his contemporary in Egypt, Ali Pasha seemed destined to dominate the western Balkans. To the British still closed out of these areas, the persona of Ali Pasha became as much a topic of strategic concern as orientalist curiosity (Fleming 1999). Indeed, with a temporary shift in fortunes with France briefly regaining control of some of the Ionian Islands, it was Ali Pasha who initiated and then secured an agreement with France to supply provisions to its troops (Aksan 2007: 214–259). In short, Ali Pasha had become so entrenched in regional affairs that

his interests extended beyond maintaining order locally; his Yanya palace became a place of diplomatic intrigue, where French, Russian, Prussian, Ottoman, and British men of power visited.[24] Ali Pasha both supplied troops to help fight Napoleon's armies and worked with the British, sometimes on behalf of the Ottomans and sometimes completely independent of any coordination with Istanbul. He was the primary power broker in the southwest Balkans in 1810s.

In the end, what is important to take from this period of expanded opportunities for Ali Pasha is the fact that he did not pursue political separation. Rather, his actions enhanced his leverage in local affairs for the purposes of strengthening a place within the Ottoman bureaucratic universe still not affected by the reforms to take place after 1838. Ali Pasha, in other words, was firmly entrenched in the Ottoman world and hoped to cooperate with the Ottomans, thus expanding with them. The agenda was to implement changes when necessary to strengthen their mutual position vis-à-vis different enemies. Often decisions made in Istanbul pushed these crucial allies at the empire's fringes in unanticipated directions.[25]

Alternative Trajectories since the 1820s

The local inhabitants throughout the western Balkans proved capable of using the institutional framework of the local administrations created first by the *ayans* and then, after the 1830s, by the *Tanzimat* reformers (Young Ottomans). This suggests that we need to constantly return to the interactions themselves rather than assuming a contentious relationship between "people" and the "state." The interactive dynamic at work suggests a constantly changing set of conditions that often blurred the line distinguishing the state from the subject. This also applies to the long-abused distinctions that we make between the foreign and the local. For instance, throughout this 1799–1807 period, many of the Albanian, Greek, and Vlach inhabitants of the mainland served in the units of the newly created Ionian Republic; these same units would also be seen fighting the Ottomans in Ruse (Rusçuk) and Vidin in 1806 on behalf of local rebels and for various regional armies, including the kingdom of Napoli and the French and Russians. These auxiliary troops would later serve as Ali Pasha's key assets to put pressure on the Ottomans, eventually to become part of the British-funded "revolution" that created the kingdom of Greece (Köprülüzade Mehmed Fuad 1920: 37–39). The point is that such temporary relations between local stakeholders and outsiders reconfigures the histori-

cal focus to one that is always reading the disaggregated local and not one predicated on a singular "national" or "imperial" set of agents.[26]

In the end, the rivalries between various aspiring empires helped create the social and political context for even greater variety in local practices and, ultimately, the consolidation of crucial state-building measures that would shape much of the nineteenth century. Therefore, it was in many ways the events that transpired around the western Balkans to which the emergent "Great Powers" were compelled to react, be it by imposing a monarchy on Greece or co-opting the long process of state centralization schemes throughout the Euro–Asian world.

Recognizing that a number of different factors, slightly changed, could have brought to the surface a whole set of other interpretative opportunities invites speculative hypotheses that may prove helpful in reinforcing the underlying argument here. It could be said, for instance, that if the Bushati clan ruling over the most important port city of the area, Shkodër, had secured enough patronage from Venice and the Habsburgs prior to Napoleon's ascendancy, these alliances could have laid the foundations of a modern Bushati state under a mixed Slav and Geg dynasty instead of Petrovići-Njegoši's Montenegro/Črna Gora.

In the same vein, for at least two decades, Ali Pasha seemed primed to take the next step; all of our twentieth-century logic would suggest that he was more likely to become the leader of an independent state than anyone in Peloponnese or Epirus at the time. Indeed, outsiders for years believed that Ali Pasha was so powerful that he alone blocked British and French expansion into the eastern Mediterranean. As we have already seen, at times during the Ionian Islands affairs, he threatened to expand his own pseudo-state throughout the southern Balkans at the expense of both the Ottomans and Russia. If analyzing his acts today using current methods, we would most likely begin by assuming that he had a strong sense of national (southern Albanian/Tosk) or religious (Muslim/Bektashi) identity. But were Ali Pasha's adventures motivated by Tosk nationalism or Bektashi exclusivism?

Few today would interpret his actions as nationalistic. Ali Pasha's state, however, was in fact investing in measures to secure the loyalty of its subjects in ways akin to modern states a century later. Who is to say that Ali Pasha would not be celebrated today as the founder of a quite plausible "Tepelina," "Tepelenistan," or the "Kingdom of Yanya," a "nation" whose borders would very easily include all of what is today "Greek" if he had succeeded? With Tepelenistan administering an area from the Peloponnese to the Lake Ohrid region for the past 150 years, no doubt the people living in the regional capitals of Salonika and Athens

would today be celebrating their Bektashi faith and Tosk heritage rather than quibbling over the ownership of the name "Macedonia."

Seeing the region's past in these terms may just put the entire century into a more ambiguous perspective and remind us that patterns of twentieth-century state-building rather than primordial motivations explain the so-called nationalist events. The best way to approach the pre–World War I Ottoman Balkans, therefore, is not to lend nationalist significance to group or community actions that for the most part were still largely self-constituted and very unlikely to see eye to eye with the few intellectuals who became the eventual founding fathers of states yet to be realized. To many who spoke several regional languages, differences in cultural heritage did not play a central, animating role in their lives. Rather, their hybrid associations hint at a diversity of interests unlikely to coalesce around an "imagined community" without other forces at play.

The independent kingdom of Greece, for instance, would later encompass a territory where a diverse group of Tosk and Morean/Epirot communities coexisted, often with considerable religious overlap. In addition, there were complex issues at play over the use of local Tosk and/or regional dialects versus some form of standardized "Greek." And yet, despite the religious and "ethnonational" differences evident to early visitors to the new kingdom—whose monarch, by the way, was Bavarian—prominent *Toskë* and Greeks (Ottomans would use *Rum/Rumlar* for those professing faith to the Eastern Orthodox Church and later *Yunan/Yunanlar* for citizens of the independent state of Greece) were capable of securing a state.[27] In other words, rather than struggle for conflicting goals, there is a long history in the nineteenth century of *Rum Toskë* and Greeks, even Muslim *Toskë* and *Rum* Greeks, sharing a common cause in the larger regional context (Politis 1931: 21; Xoxi 1991: 134). This all changed when historians began to use anachronistic terms taken from the second-half of the twentieth century to interpret the early modern world.

In the end, government in the western Balkans was to be an instrument for power, but not necessarily political independence. There was a factor of mutual dependency involved that paradoxically strengthened the bond between the Ottoman state and its western provinces through Ali Pasha. This relational dynamic would have to shift from the *ayan* to the state's bureaucracy that took on much the same roles but projected power outward. We see this with the reforms implemented immediately after addressing the last of the *ayan* phenomenon.

Provisional Modernity: The Ottoman Context

Context does wonders to our ability to interpret both the actions of individuals in so-called historical events—rebellions, riots, strikes, alliances—and their published works. Just as on Mount Lebanon and in Palestine and Eastern Anatolia, foreign power intrigue challenged the communities living in the Ottoman Balkans in different ways, at different times. Many individuals succumbed to outside overtures and became a new breed of community leader who ultimately did help break up the Ottoman Empire into ethnic and sectarian fragments. Indeed, by the 1830s, a new political culture developed in the Balkans: Political entrepreneurs with enough allies could solicit considerable outside patronage, patronage that supplied them modern rifles, money, and even, at times, crucial diplomatic immunity. Such opportunities waiting for those willing to take the plunge into sectarianism cum nationalism led Ottoman reformers from the 1830s onward to rethink the direction of the empire's administration.

The most important feature of the "Beneficial Reforms" (*Tanzimat-i Hayriye*) was the transfer of power from the palace immediately after the death of Sultan Mahmut II in June 1839 to the bureaucracy of the empire, known as the Sublime Porte (henceforth Porte). This constituted a monumental transfer of effective power to an emerging bureaucratic elite whose fundamental agenda would be to draw from the experiences of Mehmet Ali of Egypt with reform. While ultimately being forced to temper their policies to some key sectors of the imperial economy because of financial limitations, Ottoman reformers proved capable of steering the state toward what is today conventionally known as modernity.

Already by 1825 the Levant Company that once held a monopoly on trade with the Ottoman Empire was forcefully closed down. The favorable conditions that the British were able to impose on the central state in return for assisting the regime with its growing regional disintegration marked a turning point in the relationship between local circles of power, the Ottoman state, and the larger world. With a series of new free-trade agreements exposing Muslim Ottoman merchants for the first time, the clash between local interests and those of much broader, global concerns was set in motion.

Crucial to Britain's initial successes was the infiltration of the Ottoman bureaucracy. Faced with numerous challenges emanating from the western Balkans and Egypt/Syria, competing factions within the Ottoman bureaucracy debated over reaching out to various

powers. By 1838, the pro-British faction led by Mustafa Reşit Pasha won the day, immediately securing London's diplomatic and military support in return for a new free-trade agreement that made the empire's trade regime the "most liberal in the world" (Quataert 1994: 826). As a direct consequence of this first of many concessions to private capital (recall the Opium Wars in China), merchants backed by private banks, both locally based and foreign, gained a significant advantage over local merchants (Bingöl 2004: 113–145). In subsequent months and years, the leverage that merchants via diplomatic allies enjoyed pushed open and exposed the Ottoman economy to private capitalism.

Within a few years, capitalists succeeded in eliminating the powerful local *ayans* of Yanya and Cairo/Damascus, two edges of the Ottoman Empire that had virtually made the eastern Mediterranean a non-European lake, free of the encroachments of liberal colonialism that would decimate much of the world. As a result of undermining these powerful local operations that directly competed with a still undeveloped European modernism, much of the Ottoman Empire began a slow process of economic and, ultimately, political subordination. Private capital through bureaucratic surrogates in British and continental European governments eventually was able to put a stranglehold on the Ottoman Empire, one that significantly undermined the functioning cohabitation dynamic witnessed in the western Balkans until the 1830s.

Paradoxically, this process did not fully take place in a vacuum created by the disappearance of the Mehmet Ali and Ali Pasha regimes. The beginning of the *Tanzimat* signaled a slow process that over the course of the next 80 years would translate into most of the empire's peoples' economic subordination. The emphasis here, therefore, is that the process was quite slow. It is incorrect, in other words, to assume that the eastern Mediterranean and the western Balkans in particular necessarily failed first to compete and then to self-govern and thus function at a time when all societies changed. To the contrary, the phenomenon we know as modernity today was still an ongoing process, and the western Balkans was intimately engaged in decades of contingencies, adaptation, and innovation long associated with Europe and North America (Quataert 1994: 761–776; Zürcher 1997: 46–49).

Put differently, the western Balkans would remain as crucial a part of the modern world as it was during the early modern and late medieval eras of Ottoman rule. The contradictions of power in the world still limited government to an exercise of give and take in the eastern

Mediterranean world; the modernizing state of the liberal democratic world would still have decades of experimentation and concession making ahead of it. Therefore, contrary to much of the literature on this subject of "European hegemony," the western Balkans and the larger Ottoman world adjusted by introducing a new regime of governance that concentrated power into the hands of bureaucrats known as the Young Ottomans. This generation of Ottoman loyalists would reorder state power and secured a place for the empire in the larger world until the Ottomans defaulted on loans to private banks in the 1870s, the turning point when the New World Order devised new plans to address the "Eastern Question."

It would only be the brutality of the U.S. civil war and the European destruction of the indigenous peoples of North America, Southern Africa, and South Asia through the manipulation of food supply and disease that finally transformed the delicate exchanges between local and external state power (Davis 2002; Hannah 1993). For its part, the Ottoman state apparatus would straddle the tensions of this transformation of power. On one side eager to address local challenges to "modernity's" pretensions of order, the Young Ottomans were also hesitant not to undermine their own social hierarchy that was predicated on their provenance in the western Balkans. As large numbers of the Young Ottoman generation were actually *Toskë* and thus native of the region, they would insist as much the need to "improve" through government as impose order at all costs. Like Ali Pasha before them, the Tosk, Southern Slav, Bulgarian, Macedon, and Epirot bureaucrats dominating the Porte were the crucial intermediaries between the local and the larger world. As such, their careers as reformers and not engineers of genocide were possible. Their constituents—locals deemed allies, locals deemed threats, the Ottoman state, and the plethora of foreign interests—helped constantly reshape the confines of government that remained focused on stability and long-term viability as a "multiethnic" empire.

All of this suggests that we reconsider the process of "modernization" that is often associated with the imposition of reforms either indirectly from Istanbul during periods of change such as the *Tanzimat* or directly from the outside. As shown by the examples of Ali Pasha in Yanya and Mehmet Ali Pasha in Egypt, it was their homegrown schemes to "improve" the functionality of their respective states as well as help develop the larger society that proved key. The events that animated much of the Adriatic coastline from the late 1780s until the rise of violence in Morea in the 1820s—with which Ali Pasha was directly involved—demanded men of organizational skill such as

the "Lion of Janina." The ambition to "improve" the situation that would enhance Ali Pasha's subordinate role to the Ottoman Empire constituted the classic interface between the state and its subjects that laid the foundation for new polities such as the future Greek liberal elite to emerge. Therefore, Istanbul's engagement with Ali Pasha and his subsequent interactions with the population under his growing responsibilities as governor constituted those conditions of "government" theorized by scholars evoking Michel Foucault.

Not in the business of subjugating as much as governing the larger region and its inhabitants, both the Ottoman state and Ali Pasha and his developing regime in the western Balkans moved beyond "a relationship of confrontation" and started to seek the establishment of a power-sharing rapport that would be mediated through daily interactions or, as anthropologist Anna Tsing (2005) suggests, a productive "friction" between subject and state. This process of "permanent provocation" is what can be understood as a "strategy of struggle" that actually makes for several different kinds of polities in the modern world (Foucault 1982: 225–226). Politics for Istanbul, for Ali Pasha, for his local subordinates, peasants, and the outside powers flocking to negotiate with him meant navigating this ever-shifting tide of local, regional, and imperial power. This constitutes the first phases of a development in modern governance that abandons the coercive techniques *ayans* were supposed to provide and evolves into a dynamic of "governmentality" not necessarily predicated on authoritarianism. As such, it is the exchange or "friction" that makes the modern state function without the use of increasingly dangerous strongmen but rather a more assertive group of bureaucrats. That being said, this should not suggest a teleology of modern statecraft as much as introducing a new way to appreciate the multitiered relationship that Ali Pasha developed with the Ottoman Empire, his often rebellious constituents, and an aggressive group of external powers, a theme I discuss elsewhere (Blumi 2011).

Disaggregating Balkan Polarities

Ultimately, it is not useful to read these opportunistic attempts at gaining local leverage as acts of imperial sabotage or acts of nationalism. Adopting this metric to read events in the nineteenth century too often becomes a homogenizing tool that obscures other possible interpretations (Glenny 2001). I suggest that there are ways to interpret this interplay of shifting reform measures and the responses to these measures that make it clear just how contingent the modern

world really is; when faced with powerful sentiments of loyalty to community, neighbor, and family, the putative lockstep toward a totalizing modernity is far less certain. As a result of this alternative way of reading into the period's developments, we can begin to understand the "failure" to successfully implement state policies by appointed regional patriarchs and loyal surrogates not due to nationalist resistance but, instead, local agents—who did not subscribe to the whims of distant, state-backed authorities or their opponents in exile—focused on their own daily spiritual, commercial, and political needs.

Recent scholarship on a similarly conflicted Ottoman territory may provide some useful insight into how we can better represent events. In his study of Ottoman Lebanon, Ussama Makdisi notes that, not unlike events in the western Balkans, an interplay between new forms of government oversight in historically heterogeneous communities, coupled with the introduction of direct European influence in the 1840s, actually created new mediums of exchange for the inhabitants of the region, rather than diminishing indigenous agency (Makdisi 2000: 55–59). This suggests, I argue, that such exchanges may have resulted in the reinvention of Ottoman communities in a way that mirrors events unfolding in the western Balkans after 1856. Through much of the empire, in fact, as *Tanzimat*-era reformers Fuad and Ali Pasha formally granted with the *Hatt-ı Hümayun* decree legal equality to all subjects of the Ottoman state (making no distinction between Christian, Muslim, or Jew by 1856), a new formulation of state and subject interaction began to take shape (Zürcher 1997: 50–70).

Outside agitators, for their part, insisted on strengthening the bureaucratic distinctions between Christians and Muslims. In other words, while the Ottomans were imposing legal measures that seemed to erase sectarian differences in the enforcement of the law, rival European states attempted to thwart such changes by empowering those wishing to strengthen the differences (Blumi 2003b: 103–121). The discursive medium by which European agents forced their way into local politics was the insistence on the "natural" proclivities of religious communities to struggle for ascendancy through violence in their religiously mixed societies. By the stroke of a diplomatic pen and a bit of wishful thinking, some Europeans declared themselves to be the "natural" defenders of "Christian" groups that were expected to forget their past integration in multireligious communities. The modern distortion of old capitulation agreements would have an immediate impact on the political horizons of some locals. This returns us to the question of how to read into the evocation of

millet with which I started this chapter. If "leaders" were to receive the much appreciated French, Russian, or Austrian patronage, they would have to understand their relationship with their "Muslim" neighbors in terms of "rivalries" that could be resolved only through outside arbitration.

Makdisi suggests that this existential shift completely undermined the social order in Mount Lebanon and sabotaged additional reform efforts initiated by Fuad and Ali Pasha. The imposition of sectarianism in the discourse of government administration thus led to the political reconstitution of a number of actors "...in allegedly traditional sectarian terms while the very basis of tradition—absolute Ottoman sovereignty which existed 'for all time'—was being undermined." Makdisi adds that "...an informal subjecthood to European powers developed alongside formal subjecthood to a changing Ottoman state." This resulted in a process by which "...local elites nurtured an informal alliance with foreign powers very much defined by historical evolutionary time [and were] increasingly articulated through a discourse of progress and civilization" (Makdisi 2000: 68).

The links between this new discourse of "progress and civilization" is especially interesting for our purposes here, as the very same terms surface in the commentary of the educated Ottoman elite who see themselves as the guardians of the Ottoman frontiers stretching across the western Balkans and beyond (Kühn 2007). Importantly, the seismic shifts these concepts created in the Ottoman society were not so much due to the invocation of the language of "progress" by intellectuals in the context of particular regional interests, today characterized as an Albanian/Bulgarian/Greek "cultural renaissance," but due to the way the Ottoman Empire slowly divided itself into new class lines. This would translate into a new discourse of difference that, as seen in the next chapter, resulted in a generation of reformers who were to straddle their local affiliations as *Toskë*, members of at times competing branches of government—judiciary, advisory councils, parliament, military, foreign ministry, treasury—and self-identified members of what has become known in the literature as the *effendiyya* class.

The parallels experienced in western Syria and the western Balkans are intriguing: Just as some members of the Maronite clergy on Mount Lebanon filled the gap created by the systemic destruction of the local landholding elite traditionally responsible for maintaining order, so too did local Catholic and Orthodox leaders respond in the western Balkans when the political power of landowners (and their *ayan* patrons) shifted because of external reform measures (Islamoğlu

2001). As a result, not only did the traditional patriarchs of mixed communities strategically adopt the sectarianism promoted by some European powers, but the very Ottoman-Geg/Tosk, Ottoman-Slav, and Ottoman-*Rum* bureaucratic elite charged with protecting the shifting imperial frontiers identified new opportunities in such reorientations. It would be some of the same men expected to protect the heterogeneous nature of the Ottoman state who became the proponents of exclusionary religious and cultural policies simply for temporary political or economic gain.[28]

Even here, however, it is dangerous to assume that the goals of such measures were to realize what had yet been conceivable in the first quarter of the twentieth century. A whole generation of Young Ottomans working under the patronage of the quintessential Ottoman reformers Fuad and Ali Pasha apparently began to see the utility of consolidating previously distinct communities by way of collective identities, a process that can be linked to the intensification of community-building many associate with nationalists' efforts to "resurrect" primordial (but suppressed) nationalist sentiments.[29] In aiming to reconstitute disparate communities into new "macro" groups—for instance, with the establishment of the Exarchate Bulgarian church in 1870 (von Mach 1907: 43–45) or a massive province such as *Arnavutluk*—large tracts of the Balkans would become associated with categorical units later seen as essential to the modern nation-state. The problem is how to interpret the ambitions of these acts to offer a more nuanced analysis of the reactions and counteractions that ensued. I will suggest in the next three chapters that as much as Ali Pasha was not invested in separating from the larger Ottoman world, those who were promoting the consolidation of regional units of organization around what appears to be narrow group-affiliation claims were similarly acting from within an Ottoman context.

CONCLUSION

It is important not to let the seemingly familiar dynamics taking place in the 1870s affect our ability to analyze events taking place over the course of the nineteenth century. On several occasions, as we have seen in the case of Ali Pasha, virtually independent states could have emerged in other parts of the Balkans as they eventually did in the case of Serbia, Montenegro, Romania, and Bulgaria. The difference would be the fact that natives of the regions to the south, *Toskëri* in particular, were very much invested in developing the Ottoman state's capacity to secure the region, not destroy it. This

would prove especially true with the rise of the Young Ottoman generation, a cohort at once loyal to their communities in *Toskëri* and entrenched in the newly empowered Porte. Their prominent place in the Ottoman state resulted in an investment in reforms—and thus a stronger state—that directly corresponded with their long-assumed local interests.

Ultimately, the stories of these men and their legacy to the development of modern Greece, Albania, Serbia, Montenegro, and Macedonia is intimately linked to the larger Ottoman story; they were, as is the modern Balkans in general, inextricable from the history of the Ottomans, as Ottoman history is inextricable from them. In this crucial period spanning the years 1789–1875, a series of interlinking shifts of local power compelled local stakeholders such as Ali Pasha, his local rivals cum allies, the Ottoman state, and British, French, and Russian agents all to reinvest in relationships with each other. It is thus somewhat ironic that the well-established assertion that Albanians constitute a collective stretching from Tivar (Bar) to Preveza is actually a by-product of the Ottoman reform era. While today Albanians are taught to celebrate Bushati, Ali Pasha, Skenderbeg, and Mehmet Ali as great Albanians and Serbs know of Michal Obrenović today as the great Serb and so on, it is quite clear that these men did not see the extent of their "homeland" beyond their areas of control. They were still adaptive to the relative power of the enterprise; wherever they settled determined their homeland. Skenderbeg's "homeland" did not extend to Preveza or Tivar, while Ali Pasha openly embraced the Peloponnesians while attacking *Gegë* loyal to Bushati on behalf of the Ottoman Sultan.

By the 1830s, this state and local interactive dynamic created a new template for governance. It is the bureaucratic elite who hailed from Korça, Yanya, and Vlora who would champion the Ottoman state's expansion into the western Balkans. This same bureaucratic elite began to think in new ways about how to best manage these traditionally autonomous areas. The more Russia and other powers stuck their fingers into the affairs of local Balkan polities, the more the centralization of power proved attractive to these Ottoman Balkan elite, a story to which we now turn in Chapter 2.

2

Repositioning Agency and the Forces of Change

The process by which the Ottoman state successfully marginalized the powerful *ayan* and eliminated the Janissary garrisons by the 1830s opened up a series of opportunities for an entirely different set of actors. Among those most directly affected was a dedicated group of men just beginning to infiltrate the Ottoman state bureaucracy. As the intellectual force behind some of the most important transformations of the Ottoman state policies toward the western Balkans, this *Tanzimat*-era generation has been the focus of numerous studies interested in linking classes of people to "modernity" (Mardin 2000). As argued, these men, who formed a crucial part of the ascendant *effendiyya* class, initiated a new direction of government associated with the larger phenomenon of modernization in the industrializing world.

While this speculative linkage is intriguing and worthy of further study, scholars often fail to interpret the consequences of this released energy on the larger society. In other words, as much as this *effendiyya* class formed a cadre of reformers known in the literature as the Young Ottomans, we must remain vigilant not to assume that their ubiquity in the sources immediately translates into full-spectrum domination of the plethora of communities found in the empire. To the contrary, the ascendancy of the bureaucrat effectively opened up new channels of action within both the government and the larger society, even in the distant western Balkan provinces, which suggests that modern state power was selectively applied only in certain contexts.

For our purposes, this means that there were often unintended changes introduced into the larger Ottoman condition that lead to the actual dispersal of agency, a kind of multiplication of authority, rather than the concentration of power as is often claimed by those studying the modernizing state. As demonstrated throughout, these changes

provided the context for a new kind of interaction between subject and state, ultimately reconfiguring the parameters of what was politically, socially, and economically possible in the region. In so many words, the modernization process helped establish the multiple political, economic, and social foundations for the generation seen as the principal agent of change in the last decades of the Ottoman Empire (Devereux 1963).

Beyond suggesting that there was a counterintuitive dispersal of power as a result of this process of reform, we also cannot interpret this "movement" toward the implementation of the *Tanzimat* reforms (and their consequences) as having some "inevitable" causal effects, which leads the peoples, of say Bulgaria, toward nationalist realization because of their exposure to "modern European ideas."[1] As argued below, making such links is problematic for two reasons. First, what constitutes "modern forms of governmental practice" may not have originated from engagements with "European" influences. Mehmet Ali initiated "modern" governmental reforms in Egypt years before similar reforms were to emerge in Europe. In this respect, the state centralization, military reform, and streamlined revenue-collection strategies that the Young Ottomans either inherited or copied from Egypt's administrative practices in Syria, Palestine, and Anatolia *predate* putative European bureaucratic innovations by a considerable margin.[2] The chronology, therefore, is misleading at best.

A second reason the scholarship on the Ottoman *Tanzimat* period is problematic relates to the possibility that the entire process of state modernization—from governance by proxy in the *ayan* era to centralized management by a multilayered bureaucracy—was neither uniform within Ottoman territories nor consistently implemented. Even within individual provinces, say "Bulgaria," the link between ideas, processes, and social conditions was rarely extended between individual moments of action. Events were so disconnected, each region within "Bulgaria" or "Albania" so distinct, that any attempt to link these vast geographic areas with assumptions of universal experience must be challenged. In other words, the *Tanzimat* would be part of a wider struggle involving the same interactive dynamics under the *ayan*, where local context shaped a larger set of processes—which included the outside world—all culminating in a nexus of multifarious and contingent reforms.

In this chapter, I explore the many trajectories of these processes as they play out both in the western Balkans and in Istanbul. This period of reform long associated with the larger phenomenon of modern state centralization throughout Europe and the Americas involves a complex interchange between various stakeholders whose

opportunities and possibilities multiplied with the new configurations of government power. The Ottoman reforms of the 1839–1875 period thus launched social reorientations whose consequences were varied and profound not only for individuals but also for the Ottoman society at large—specifically communities in the western Balkans from which many of the Young Ottomans would come. At times, and depending on the given context, those invested in the spirit of the reforms completely transformed the manner in which they interacted with their putative "ethnic" homelands. Thus, by complicating how we understand the effects these transformations had on the primary stakeholders—the bureaucrats and reformers—as well as how they translated their newly articulated interests on the ground, in the western Balkans, we can begin the task of reinstating the Ottoman Empire into the modern history of the region.

The Sociocultural Context of the Reformer

As the state formally expanded, and links between imperial patronage and local agents were established increasingly through government bureaucracies, the rise of a western Balkan "middle class" reflected how power shifted from the landed elite who had long served as the primary intermediary between the state and the majority of the empire's rural and urban subjects.[3] In one respect, increasingly forced to reposition their still-formidable power through the new formalities of government emerging during the *Tanzimat*, what had once been a direct relationship with the sultan and his closest advisors was now mitigated by a bureaucracy whose division of labor diluted the capacities of any single regional stakeholder to blackmail the larger state. In a matter of years, the once formidable dangers posed by disgruntled regional leaders were watered down by bureaucrats who began to establish their own links with the provinces. In a sense, the rapid growth of this *effendiyya* class rendered the bases of power of the old social elite unintelligible by providing an alternative route for locals to address their ever-shifting needs. Often, the liberal idiomatic form in which these exchanges were expressed—at times in newspapers or public rallies—would become the building blocks of policies that members of this reform-minded community hoped would eventually structure all social exchanges in the Ottoman Empire.[4]

The problem is that, with the power of the *ayan/bayraktar* dispersed, it is not clear whether the culturally alien *effendiyya* class really filled in the assumed local power vacuum. There is plenty of room to

be skeptical of the extent to which the shift in formal power actually affected life in the Ottoman Empire. After all, contingencies in any part of the western Balkans, let alone the Levant, Eastern Anatolia, or Arabia, demanded that *Tanzimat* reformers adapt to each crisis separately. In other words, it was still a reality for the managers of this putative New World Order that nothing could be fully implemented without individually engaging local polities (Blumi 2011).

That being said, even if the objective accuracy of this communicated "understanding" of a universal liberal ideal proves questionable, upon closer case-by-case scrutiny there is an important factor that allows us to study the *Tanzimat* as a uniform subject: the self-identified roles of the *effendiyya* class vis-à-vis the western Balkans. As highlighted throughout, there is an interesting tension in the way these men orientated themselves, as reformers, toward the region. Because of the disproportionate number of natives of the region making up this cadre of Young Ottomans, many faced the awkward task of assuming legitimacy on the basis of direct association to a society that they believed was in desperate need of reform. Undoubtedly, this resulted in considerable embarrassment and perhaps explains some of the more violent measures that they would adopt in the western Balkans. Seen in other settings as the parvenu, these "self-hating" Albanians, Bulgarians, Greeks, and Vlachs would prove to be the most virulent advocates for the kind of "harsh love" long associated with a particularistic European colonialism.

One cannot help but read this colonialist attitude in the correspondences of native-born bureaucrats. In almost absolute ubiquity, when analyzing the conditions in the western Balkans, the emphasis was on the special role that the state should play in changing the region. The most crucial task of this empowered state was to integrate the region into a larger world that these local members of the Young Ottomans saw (or imagined) was emerging. Revealingly, these policy agendas were regularly iterated in quasi-racist tones, where "reform" in the provinces entailed "civilizing" local populations (Makdisi 2002). While such attitudes have been already observed in the Ottoman story (Deringil 1997; Reinkowski 2005), it is actually the "native-son" who used the racist colonial epistemology to justify "governing" his homeland as a hostile land in need of "civilizing" violence. In other words, native-born members of the Ottoman state apparatus were the greatest apologists for Ottoman bureaucratic expansionism in the western Balkans during the nineteenth century.

In this regard, many of these homegrown reformers proved especially skilled at "imposing" direct state rule. Outside observers

were impressed with (if not envious of) the changes taking place in the Balkans since reforms were first implemented. Some likened the reforms to the resurrection of a paralyzed body "…revived as soon as the enlightenment of the present generation recalled it to life…totally altered [in] its political condition in the short period of sixteen years" (Porter and Larpent 1854: 23–24). More important perhaps, the admiration and praise was directed at "a few individuals" whose "*spirited and patriotic exertions* [emphasis mine]…will be continued by the pupils and imitators of those few eminent Statesmen, each of whom is surrounded by a chosen band of disciples brought up in their principles" (Porter and Larpent 1854: 24). In other words, the Ottoman government, consisting of what many outside admirers labeled patriotic loyalists, expanded in size with considerable power dividends for those who joined in this revolution (Findley 1980: 65).

This meant a growing arena of action, which, in turn, empowered the *effendiyya* through their self-selective system of promotion within an often lucrative bureaucratic apparatus increasingly entrusted to "reform" the Ottoman Empire.[5] As they grew in strength, these Balkan-natives began to focus more and more on "taking care of their own." Young Ottomans did in fact begin to see themselves as distinct from the larger society and they, like any other self-identifying interest group, protected their influence and privileges as much as possible (Findley 1980).

Localizing Reform

That being said, there is always a danger of thinking of this *effendiyya* "class" as a monolith. To the contrary, there were internal divisions, factions, and ultimately rivalries that reflected the initial geographic, social class, and "ethnic" diversity of this bureaucracy. There is evidence, for instance, that the reforms so vigilantly implemented were not applied uniformly. Often the more lucrative projects and its big budgets went to home districts while the more authoritarian measures were dedicated to underrepresented areas. In this crucial way, native-born bureaucrats often hailing from *Toskëri* administered each region, in each distinct instant, with different kinds of reforms. This suggests a manner of applying state power that was always mitigated by a combination of local conditions and personal connections to the communities slotted for reform. There was, in other words, a local and personal context to the way "modernity" was implemented as well as experienced.

I will expand on this by demonstrating that many native-born reformers proved adept at translating the reforms of the new order that they were implementing into new opportunities for their family members and fellow villagers. In many ways, they ensured that the transformations would embody a set of individual and collective interests leading to the creation of an often conflictual set of results that benefited some individuals—partners or constituents—with whom *Tanzimat* reformers associated back in the western Balkans. At the same time, while conflicts of interest may translate into a positive flow of government funds and jobs for many in the western Balkans, it could mean an imbalanced, unjustified use of negative government power for others. This incongruence is possible to identify, however, only if we disaggregate the bureaucracy, breaking apart the generic into more detailed units of observation. This requires distinguishing the native-born from the nonnative as well as going a step further and understanding that being from one village, *kabile,* or *fis* and not the one from which a reformer came probably determined the quality of "reform" in one area or another.

To the many natives of the western Balkans who formed a large part of this bureaucratic class, the larger spirit of reform meant harnessing their localism to a larger state apparatus. With this considerable potential for power, they then often projected back to the region their personal and collective prejudices, which translated into exploitative, arrogant, and even violently hostile policies toward select groups. For many Young Ottomans, therefore, the opportunity to "reform" parts of the western Balkans meant "naming" and characterizing the "nature" of these regions as well as devising schemes to implement "development" or "expansion" that would mirror the patronizing, often racist discourses associated with western European colonialism of the same period (Williams 1989, 1995).

At the same time, the power of the state to allocate money would translate into considerable amounts of state development funds flowing into the home districts of bureaucrats. As a result, there was a significant disparity in how the *Tanzimat* reforms were implemented in the western Balkans relative to the larger empire. Now we will see how this plays out specifically among putative Albanians, both *Toskë* and *Gegë*, who were successfully integrated into the Ottoman regime during the *Tanzimat.* These men will prove heavily invested into their association with a new order of life, often at the expense of what we are told today are their fellow "countrymen's" interests.

Importantly, these criteria of prejudice were never fixed, and they were constantly changed as the world transformed around them.

Individuals and groups alike constantly translated the meaning and value of these systems of differentiation—linking one's association to *Toskë/Gegë*, Bektashi/Catholic—to perceptions of power that, over the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, changed in often dramatic ways. For those self-identifying "modern" men, wearing "modern" clothes, for instance—long, "Western"-style coats, and fez caps, the quintessential marker of an Ottoman gentleman—may have reflected a larger *attitude* toward the very objects of this *effendiyya* class' reforms, namely, the traditional, "uncivilized" locals (read: *Gegë/Malësorë*) who still resisted "reforms," "union," and "progress." The task now is to begin understanding these relations at their most subtle levels to retell western Balkan histories (figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1 The cultural divide: Ottoman gentlemen and Geg *burrë*. Skopje 1903. (Photo: Franz Nopcsa, Courtesy of Robert Elsie, www.elsie.com.) Available at: http://www.albanianphotography.net/graf/photos_nopcsa1/nopcsa304.html.

Reforming the Margins, Renaming the Agenda

By integrating the work of historians of the empire who consider state power as a reflection of elite pathologies struggling to deal with "subaltern agency," we find that the Ottoman Balkans and, indeed, the societies that by the mid-nineteenth century were evolving beyond the direct influence of Ottoman state reforms also seem to change in incongruent, "lumpy" ways (Cooper 2005: 190–194). In response to this subaltern agency, the erudite masters of the modern world adopted increasingly idiosyncratic ways to objectify the poor—"savage" mountain "tribesmen," pirates, or religious fanatics—to address anxieties about their inability to control events on the ground (Young 1995: 155–182). One method may have been the frequently modified narrative of mass politics, including "populism" and ultimately nationalism, beginning to emerge in media.

Studying what are ultimately exchanges rather than clashes reveals how Ottoman intellectuals and the "masses" were equally complicit in a process that transformed the imperial project throughout the world, doing so in very particular ways within the Ottoman Empire. For the Balkan intelligentsia, be they in Istanbul, Belgrade, Salonika, Paris, or Vienna, the creation of literary tropes about the "people," *halklar*, *narod*, or other variations of the German concept of *völkisch*, proved important to understanding their homelands as objects of state reform in the nineteenth century.[6] In many ways, their attempts to assert distinctive associations in the terminology of *millet* that gained new importance in the late nineteenth century reflected how many members of the Ottoman Balkan elite articulated frustrations with the lack of social mobility and perhaps the feeling of being trapped on the periphery of a more cosmopolitan and dynamic Ottoman society.

In studying this bureaucratic self-realization in other parts of the Ottoman Empire, including the cities of Istanbul, Salonika, and Beirut, historians increasingly note a sincere effort at mass mobilization by elements of the Ottoman elite (Hanssen 2002). Rather than being a crude evocation of universalistic identities based on religion or ethnicity unique to the "Middle East," however, Ottoman intellectuals promoted modernist ideals and implemented programs of social reform that actually should be studied and compared with those in Europe at the time (Makdisi 2000: 15–27).

Exploring further the categories of practice and analysis in the context of reforms will help us read the documents that the *effendiyya* wrote with respect to their practical intentions in the western

Balkans. Much of the discourse became formulaic and filled with era-specific jargon that mirrors the kind of colonialist rhetoric found in governmental settings around the world. In the theoretical literature, many key terms in the interpretive social sciences and history—race, nation, ethnicity, citizenship, democracy, class, community, and tradition—are at once categories of social and political "practice" as much as categories of social and political analysis (Stoler 1995). These categories, in other words, were meant to simplify the governing process by accounting for everyday social experiences that of course were acts of "ordinary" social actors. In using these terms of abstraction to identify whole populations or even practicing the renaming of territories to suit new visions of state, *effendiyya* such as the Frashëri brothers, Pashko Vasa, Ismail Qemali, and other powerful western Balkan natives abstracted themselves from their objects of "study," affecting the comportment of "objective," "professional," and "scientific" social analysts. The idea of an increased role for the reformists Young Ottomans thus filtered into provincial locations such as Damascus, Cairo, Istanbul, Salonika, Belgrade, Sarajevo, and Shkodër, and started to function among members of this class as a "politics of notables" that dissociated them from some (but not all) of their supposed local constituents (Zaalouk 1989).

We see this played out in the late *Tanzimat* period with a relatively sharp distinction between native or folk categories on the one hand and social scientific categories emerging throughout the world on the other. New concepts of race, ethnicity, or nation would be marked by close reciprocal connections between the practical and analytical uses of such concepts. Over time, something we can call ethnic entrepreneurialism (Lal 1997: 385–413) would arise as many identified a niche in the larger world by evoking "ethnic" terms au courant among certain members of the international bourgeoisie. Indeed, many members of larger Ottoman society who straddled the local and the central state engaged the western Balkans in these highly fluid terms as a means to gain influence either in Istanbul or abroad. Often, the growing opportunities for governmental attention produced lucrative investments for those practicing this form of ethnic entrepreneurialism. In *Toskalık/Toskëri*, for example, such manipulation could result in considerable amounts of development funds from Istanbul or a patron state such as Greece or Russia, whereas in *Gegalık/Gegëni*, attention from the state would most likely take the form of a prison or new weapons for a cooperative militia commander.

The rise, in other words, of "ethnic" groups that survived the erasure of post-Ottoman historiography, as well as those that have long

been forgotten, could take on many forms. The ones most likely to have made it to the history books, however, were those capable of developing a sophisticated line of exchange with the government in the form of adaptive terms of analysis fitting their specific conditions. That is to say, many groups directly connected to the new categories of analysis adopted by outside visitors and Balkan-native Ottoman reformers alike. There was, in other words, complicity between the objectified local and those who would use these analytical notions to conflate the changing economic and political interests with supposed sociological realities and truths (Wacquant 1997: 222–223).

It is at this time when various "identity" claims got reflected both in categories of state and local practice and as a category of analysis (Göçek 1996, 109–110). As a category of practice, it was used increasingly (but not always!) by actors in everyday settings to make sense of themselves and their activities and, thus, communicate their specific interests to others. Often, the identity claims used were framed in geographic terms, so at one point, a set of local interests could be presented in the form of the immediate community—Hoti, Gruda, Kelmendi, and Kastrati—larger confederations of communities—*Malësorë, Gegë, Bijelopavlić*—or finally entire regions—Montenegro/*Karadağ*, Kosova, Macedonia, Albania/*Arnavutluk*. It is this last spatial configuration that is especially interesting; the evocation of what were geographic abstractions to identify a larger possible constituency, for instance, "Prizren," "Drenica," "Montenegro," or "*Arnavutluk*," was increasingly used to persuade locals to understand themselves momentarily in one productive way and not another (Bajrami 2009: 88–101). These geographic-specific shared identities would also frame for those evoking the category, of say Arnavutlar, Karadağlar, Serb, Mirdita, or Herzegovinian, the parameters of an "imagined" temporary community's interests.

As we will see in the next three chapters, such geographically based bureaucratic associations, rather than specific cultural ones linked to *fis* in the *Malësi*—the Gruda, the Vukli, Nikçi, and Kuçi—were devised to persuade certain people that they were (for certain purposes) "identical" with one another and at the same time different from others. Moreover, these associations were used to organize and justify collective action along certain lines often ambiguously set during war and postwar treaty making. In these ways, the term "identity" is implicated both in everyday life and in the "identity politics" of states throughout the *Tanzimat* and immediate post–*Tanzimat* era.

What is crucial to draw from exploring this interesting side effect of Young Ottoman policies is that these were all contingent and

short-lived. The reification of different identity associations proved to be a social process, not just an intellectual practice. Analyzing this kind of politics leads us to an accounting of processes and mechanisms through which what has been called the "political fiction" of the nation becomes but one of many possibilities available to the many competing stakeholders in the western Balkans. As I constantly wish to iterate in this study, we must be careful not to assume that these periodic claims to broader associations constitute what most post-Ottoman historians claim them to mean. These suddenly "modern" expressions of long-used strategies of engagement by locals vis-à-vis the larger world betray the underlying tensions of the empire often forgotten in the literature on Balkan nationalism.

To begin offering a new angle to understanding the role that locals played in shaping their own destiny at the end of the nineteenth century by being integral parts of the larger Ottoman Empire, it may be helpful to consider how advocates of reform actually understood the dynamics behind such measures in the Balkans.[7] Drawing on recent studies of late Ottoman literature and social commentary, in particular, helps to highlight how Ottoman intellectuals did not interpret events as manifestations of European, and thus foreign, cultural hegemony. From Ali Cevad, Lütfiye Hanım, and Ahmed Vefik to Ahmed Cevdet, Ottoman observers believed that local factors, along with outside machinations, accounted for the temporary, parochial, and isolated events in the Balkans covered in this book (Boyar 2007: 42–71). More important, these witnesses were particularly certain that the animating factors behind the occasional outbreak of violence were not linked to what we today call nationalism. In fact, the contingent actions of locals actually frustrated the ambitions of outside states as much as the Ottomans themselves to more clearly unify these communities. This proves crucial when considering the impact that contingencies had on how prominent Ottoman Balkan natives responded to the forces pushing and pulling the empire during the course of the middle years of the nineteenth century.

The demonstrably ideological constructions of the "people" did not take place in a social, cultural, or political vacuum. The targets of what became nationalist romanticism actually determined the extent to which important early "nationalists" could recreate their idealistic vision of the nation while also remaining committed to their Ottoman universe. We see this with the examples of the creative work of Pashko Vasa Pasha (henceforth Pashko Vasa), Sami Frashëri/Şamseddin Sami (henceforth Sami) and his two older brothers—Naim and Abdyl—as

well as one of the founders of the Young Turk underground movement, Ibrahim Temo.

Men such as the Frashëri brothers, Ismail Qemali, Pashko Vasa, and Ibrahim Temo formed a cohort that, even when faced with challenges to the empire, for the most part did not take the separatist route. Writing poems, essays, and plays, these men would serve as the foundation of the next phase of adaptation starting from 1875, when the world in which they emerged again threatened to crumble, as covered in detail in the next chapter. That being said, they did not constitute a monolith easily enframed in post-Ottoman categories such as "Albanian." They operated within a set of fluid social roles and thus had often contradictory expectations. The divergent careers of many can be appreciated, therefore, only by considering their individual ambitions, the impact reform efforts of the Ottoman state had on their particular set of networks, and the growing presence of outside powers whose money and promises of new kinds of opportunities successfully disrupted temporary alliances.

This also proves to be the case in newly created Serbia. At first glance, the dichotomy of variable economic possibilities in the larger cultural context that was the modernizing world seems utterly irreconcilable with sustainable governance over complex societies. But that does not mean "ethnic differences" were the central animating force. Indeed, the arrogance evident in "nationalist" publications in Serbia during the 1880–1912 period demonstrates that the Belgrade intelligentsia feared not only Albanians, Bulgarians, and Turks but also their "own" Serb peasants (Djordjević 1979). The issue, in other words, revolved around power and who was using nationalism to secure influence in the heterogeneous society of the new Serbian state. Many of the same Serb liberals who demanded the conquest of all of "Old Serbia," which included much of the Kosovo and Manastir provinces still under Ottoman rule, also strongly advocated disarming Serbian peasants, noting that they were still not reliable and too backward to serve the interests of Belgrade's political elite (Djordjević 1979).

Other incongruent factors also contributed to social instability and political opportunities. Earlier studies linking violence to organized political campaigns note the strong propensity of "guns for hire" to turn against their previous patrons if the money encouraging them to do so was good enough, an important consideration to keep in mind when talking about "insurgents" in the late Ottoman Empire. In one study, so-called "Greek patriots" actually proved more likely to serve as mercenaries available to the highest bidder (Koliopoulos

1987: 59–60). Hardly a reflection of the "natural" aspirations of "nationalists" "fighting the Ottoman oppressor," this kind of "activism" was directly linked to violent organizations such as *Slovenski Jug* (Slav South) or various movements in Macedonia that resisted the sectarianism promoted from abroad (Gingeras 2003). To the horror of many among the Belgrade and Sofia elite (and infamous xenophobes such as Svetislav Simić), most of the local population resisted efforts by such outsiders as the *Slovenski Jug* or Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO) to instigate strife within their communities (Jelavich 1991: 214, 241–244).

In time, the fact that Belgrade-based elites, for instance, could not automatically generate conflict in heterogeneous communities forced them to modify their ideological and administrative positions (Simić 1902). What was happening during the transactions between these nationalist organizations and the "unrefined" Serb, Greek, or Bulgarian peasants of Ottoman Kosova or Manastir may ultimately prove that abandoning the categories imposed by Belgrade, Athens, Sofia, Istanbul, or Bucharest-based elite produces a new angle of analysis for periods of transition in the Balkans. Luckily for those hoping to instigate social unrest, while Serbian "nationalist" sentiments failed to mobilize the "uneducated" rural communities found in Ottoman Kosova and Macedonia, the administrative failures of the sultan's regime often did the job of disaggregating communities for them.

In this period, Ottoman state agencies presumed considerable power over the same "uncivilized" locals. At times, the overwhelming shift in strategies seemed to follow a clear trajectory toward monopoly of coercive power in the hands of the state. Local despots linked to various ministries and parliamentarian bodies alike entertained absolutist ambitions as outsiders invested resources into a new vehicle—the state—to maximize the capacity of private capital to extract surplus from the world. Scholars in the twentieth century often unquestionably treat these confrontations in the Ottoman Balkans as representations of an indigenous effort of separation on the basis of a language, religion, sect, or historically fixed geographic terms. This is especially clear in regard to the misrepresentation of the drive to create a single mega province such as Syria in the Middle East, Tuna (Danube), Prizren, and then *Arnavutluk* (Albania) by key members of the Young Ottoman generation. What is conveniently forgotten is the context in which reformers such as the Pomok Midhat Pasha initiated the last phase of reforms that created these mega provinces.

Some of the schemes that Midhat Pasha developed were the insertion of direct power via a newly reformed police force, the expansion of infrastructure, and schooling in the Niš *sancak* he governed. These policies coincided with the larger civilization-building project found throughout Europe at the time and mirrored the sentiments already discussed above among other native Balkan members of the Ottoman government.[8] In other words, Midhat Pasha and the elite he represented began to convince historically independent communities to see their immediate interests as extending beyond the confines of their traditional areas.

The 1850s in autonomous Ottoman principalities such as Serbia and Montenegro witnessed a number of important measures implemented in the attempt to consolidate power around landed elites, a set of power shifts that translated into new forms of identity politics paralleling those in the rest of Europe (Heer 1981: 76–110; Karanovich 1995: 177–198). In rapid succession, the Ottoman state responded to some Slav leaders' increasing overtures to Russia by investing considerable resources into securing, for instance, the area around Shkodër, the commercial hub of the region bordering then autonomous Montenegro. Of the government agents charged with securing the area, the first, Ömar Lüfti, proved controversial (and counterproductive) because, between the years 1851 and 1853, he initiated the first attempt at directly taxing local communities (Reinkowski 2003: 249).[9]

As a result of the predictably violent resistance to these taxes, a new generation of state officials elected to adopt a different set of reforms that spent less time focusing on taxing local landowners and more on simply co-opting them to serve the government in some capacity. Under a new governor, Menemenli Mustafa Pasha, for instance, the Ottoman state invited prominent locals to join a committee that brought all communities of the *Malësi* together.[10] Community leaders in the immediate area around the city of Shkodër who joined this committee, called the Committee of the Shkodër Mountains (CSHM), were given formal titles and salaries and were charged with the responsibility of ensuring stability and the smooth administration of areas previously only nominally under state control (Gawrych 2006: 33). Such overtures initiated a process of regional integration that would open the door for greater direct state rule in these previously isolated regions. Within five years, another set of attempts to integrate the larger region, this time initiated by the famous *Tanzimat* reformer Ahmet Cevdet, would take place in Shkodër (Cevdet 1986: 2: 190). The Young Ottomans, in other words, were institutionally formalizing a communal identity of *Malësorë*.

What encouraged this round of reforms was the destruction of previously hierarchical class structures as a direct result of new priorities in the wider world. At the heart of Ottoman worries was the introduction of Russian, Austrian, Italian, British, and French agents (usually consuls and vice-consuls or priests, distributed in all major towns) to the region. Their money, and often their freelance diplomacy, compelled polyglot landowners and their merchant partners to negotiate power through new channels that were directly arbitrated by the allies of outside powers, as also happened in the wider region of *Karadağ*/Montenegro/Črna Gora.[11]

Much as would later happen in the Middle East, the nature of this patronization of Christians, Muslims, Greeks, and previously marginal landholders created local turmoil and regional tensions. In time, such exchanges between locals and outsiders became the norm in the western Balkans. This process, seen as the precursor to modern ethnonationalist politics, was not, however, inevitable. As always, the things happening throughout the western Balkans need analysis without the "benefit" of hindsight. Changes involving local actors after all were also part of a larger government policy at the time. *Tanzimat* reformers, for instance, were clearly investing in concentrating power in the hands of state authorities who would help manage society through newly created bureaucracies. These bureaucracies constituted a new regime of provincial administration that required the establishment of entirely new provinces. Istanbul's energetic reformers thus established a new master plan to reform the way the Balkans was administered, and this required local collaboration. This included the 1864 *Vilâyet nizâmnâmesi* (Provincial Reform Decree), a reform measure that aimed to consolidate into the hands of one bureaucratic apparatus the responsibility of governing vast territories in the Balkans (Findley 1980: 190–220).

Starting with the Tuna (Danube) *vilâyet* in 1864, and then the Prizren *vilâyet* in 1868, the policy assumed that a unified administration, such as the one created in *Malësi* with the CSHM, could best consolidate vast areas under the threat of growing Russian and Austro-Hungarian expansionism. Ensuring this stability required erasing the localism that kept communities virtually independent of state authority and at odds with their neighbors (Kaleshi and Kornrumpf 1967: 181–182). Previously unable to secure any unifying standard by which all subjects in the culturally and linguistically diverse regions of Kosova and Işkodra could be assembled, these reformers thus introduced plans such as the CSHM that aimed to create units of association that would unite people beyond their

immediate local interests by way of a bureaucracy. This is the origin of the idea of *Arnavutluk*.

Today, some see these reforms as both stimulants for and products of a time when there was a confluence of intellectual and bureaucratic responses to pan-Slavism, pan-Hellenism, and Ottomanism. As Nathalie Clayer (2006: 221–245) has suggested, the emergence of "Albanianism" was directly linked to the anti-Slav reactions emerging in the Ottoman society as Russia expanded its influence in the Caucasus and Balkans. Partly Hellenistic, partly Islamic in nature, an important sense of belonging that went beyond the immediate community emerged among many Ottoman-*Toskë/Gegë* as a result. On account of these emerging sentiments, key local leaders identified a link between strengthened administrative control over hitherto-neglected areas of the western Balkans and the long-term survival of the Ottoman state in which they had heavily invested.

Importantly, while their agenda may have been to consolidate the authority of the Ottoman state, the principal agents of this policy at the local level—Hasan Tahsini (first director of Istanbul University, known in Albanian literature as Hoxha Tahsini), the Frashëri brothers, Zef Jubani, and Pashko Vasa[12]—were not immune to the regionalism that the reforms had sought to erase. For one, considerable tension existed between these activists of reform and the constituents they hoped to co-opt. This tension distorted an otherwise straightforward example of state centralization that confounds the simplistic nationalist paradigms still in vogue today.

Reforming Home for the Empire

Since Tosk officials played a central role in the application, if not the outright design, of reform policies in the western Balkans, the Ottoman state adopted different strategies for Tosk and Geg territories. As already suggested, *Toskë* based in Istanbul and embedded in the reformist regime had few to no links in Kosova and Işkodra while maintaining strong personal connections with their home regions further south. As a result, Tosk Ottoman reformers were selective when advocating for the expansion of direct state control of the western Balkans. One of the ways this was manifested was the attitude of Tosk elite toward the mountainous regions in *Malësi*, which they believed constituted the biggest threat to Ottoman state development. The projects adopted by the future luminaries of Ottoman-Tosk culture were thus underpinned by an articulated frustration with the lack of "order" in the mountainous regions. The major concern was that

unless these autonomous mountainous regions were formally incorporated into the larger Ottoman society, it would be through these areas that Russia or Austria-Hungary would be able to penetrate the empire. Events further to the north in Bosnia during the 1860s and 1870s proved these fears to be justified. The idea then was to promote an aggressive campaign of civilization building at the expense of long enjoyed local autonomy, and often at the end of a gun.[13]

Already in 1857, reformers were attempting to expand on earlier efforts to assert state influence in the *Malësi* by working with the local Catholic clergy, who historically worked to suppress the so-called blood feuds problem, a debilitating series of vendettas that had kept highland communities in a state of perpetual warfare. Initially, the idea was to avoid using force. Among the strategies to bring the region some stability included the strengthening of a religious presence (by building more churches and mosques) and a greater investment in direct government involvement in the area by building police stations, courthouses, and schools. As revealed in the fine work of Hasan Kaleshi (1964), Ottoman reformers often advocated establishing judicial uniformity and normalizing the daily interactions between state officials and the local populations through these newly created offices. In particular, reformers hoped that the investment in government structures could solidify the authority of Ottoman judges, who, with the coaxing of clergy, would begin to replace a violent social domain largely inaccessible to the state. In essence, the goal of these early reforms was to replace the local leaders who had been the major arbiters in peoples' lives with streamlined state surrogates who would always assist Istanbul while helping unify a society traditionally fragmented by blood feuds (Kaleshi 1964: 110).

At times such efforts would require the old strategy of simply co-opting rivals by appointing them as the chief of a newly created police station or the headmaster of a new school. The subtleties of modern state-building, however, did not allow for this age-old policy of buying loyalty and pitting rivals against each other to be the sole substitute for direct rule. New methods initiated during the *Tanzimat* took a cultural track as much as an institutional one. In the context of instituting greater direct Ottoman administration of the highland regions, publicly expressed animosity toward the "tribal habits" practiced in "savage mountain districts" increasingly made its way into the documents and early newspapers (Deringil 2003: 322). These state-sanctioned outbursts ridiculed strong community identifiers along *fis* or "tribal" lines, in effect juxtaposing loyalty to family and community with good citizenship, as demanded by the Ottoman officials

linked to the Ottoman state (Reinkowski 2005: 189–194, 264–278). In this regard, the assumed inaccessibility of such communities and their fierce localisms required direct state intervention that combined bureaucratic measures and cultural chauvinism.

In the end, the discourse on backward Geg tribal culture represents a crucial shift in the Ottoman rule of the western Balkans. For many Ottoman officials from Tosk regions, the *Malësor* savage was as much a tool of state expansion as the institutions that were meant to civilize these people.[14] Such thinking has parallels in other modern societies of course. Much like the Ottomans, other empires faced similar administrative problems as they absorbed large tracts of the Americas, most of Africa, and southern Asia (Guha 1994; Mallon 1994).

Revealingly, the stated animus toward the *Malësorë* and their "uncivilized" nature did not arise from the Tosk Ottoman elite alone. By the time the *Tanzimat* reformers were making their move into the region, native sons were also vocal critics of *Malësorë* resistance. The few agents of state expansion who actually came from the regions targeted for reform were prepared to accommodate not only the growing state presence in their homeland but also its use of some of the more pernicious cultural tools of the modern state: the politics of civilization. For example, both Zef Jubani and Pashko Vasa, influential *Gegë* with long track records of service to the Ottoman state, shared with their Tosk allies a certain intellectual distance from the people living in the north, especially the rugged mountains. In particular, Shkodër-native Zef Jubani decried the failure of the *Tanzimat* reforms to reach the *Malësorë*. He not only blamed bureaucratic incompetence for this but also offered a cultural explanation for the ultimate failure of reforms to reach the region. Jubani saw the continued lack of government presence in these areas as the result of the resistance by the "uncivilized" *Malësorë* to progress (Clayer 2006: 217–218). As noted later, we see this view in Pashko Vasa's poetry as well.

Provisional Origins of Pashko Vasa's *Shqyptarija*

That Jubani and Pashko Vasa would ultimately excoriate the Ottoman state for failing to change their fellow highland peoples marks a significant cultural, political, and, ultimately, psychological idealization of the state that cannot be easily brushed aside by using our generic notions of nationalism. Where the state failed was in bringing civilization to the people whose separatist potential stemmed from their lack of modern values and cultural resources. The clear distinction for reformers such as Jubani and Pashko Vasa was a cultural one: any

sense of solidarity they might have had with "mountain savages" did not extend to their being *Gegë* or Catholics; it could be made only at a cultural level, which could be reached only by their subordination to Ottoman high culture.[15] For men of Jubani and Pashko Vasa's standing, being Ottoman required abandoning tradition and the "backwardness" it preserves.

Whether or not this distinction was a product of these men's education or a reflection of a more complex process of socialization needs further study. What is important here is that these men were firmly linked to a strategy of suppressing *Malësorë* autonomy. Calls for "unity" (*ittihat*) and the emergent discourse of the "fatherland" (*vatan*) would weave in and out of the writings of such men as Pashko Vasa for the next 40 years, a process that has sometimes been confused with a form of "natural" patriotism that did not yet exist. Therefore, instead of seeing Pashko Vasa's laments in 1878 about the sorry state of affairs in the *Malësi* as quintessential Albanian nationalism, works such as *O moj Shqypni* could be read as a guide to understanding what Istanbul-based reformers thought were the consequences of being so intractably separated from everyone else. Read in this context, Pashko Vasa's lines speak of a society torn by divisions that are partially linked to the lack of a single, all-encompassing identity:

Shqyptar, me vllazën jeni t'u vra,	People of *Arnavutluk*, you are killing your brothers,
Ndër nji qind çeta jeni shpërnda;	Into a hundred factions you are divided,
Sa thon kam fe, sa thon kam din,	Some say "I have religion" others "I have faith,"
Njeni: jam turk, tjetri; latin	Some say "I am a Turk," [Muslim] others "Latin," [Catholic]
Do thom: jam grek, shkje disa tjerë,	Some say "I am Greek,' others "I am Slav,"
Por jeni vllazën, t'gjith, more t'mjer!	But you are brothers, all of you, o the misfortunate!
Priftnit e hoxhët ju kan hutue,	The priests and the imams have deceived you,
Për me ju da e me ju vorfnue.	In order to divide you and keep you poor.
Vjen njeri i huej e ju rri n'votër,	An outsider comes and steals your hearth
Me ju turpnue me grue e me motër;	And he shames both your wife and sister,
E për sa pare qi do t'fitoni,	And for the money will you earn,
Besën e t'parëve t'gjith e harroni,	Your ancestors' oaths of honor you forget.[16]

I suggest that the project Pashko Vasa and his colleagues in Istanbul had in mind was creating a sense of community that extended beyond

the parochial confines of *Malësi's* isolated valleys. The goal of this policy of inclusion was not separation, but creating a collective group identity, an Albanian *millet* so to speak, that would serve the interests of all Ottoman subjects. This twisting of interests seems improbable today only because observers rarely appreciate just how fluidly people interacted with others. Moreover, in the context of the late nineteenth century, Pashko Vasa's *Shqypni* is not the construct of a separate independent state, but a formal, vital component of a great empire staving off Russia's land grab of 1878.[17]

Another central component to linking the vastly different peoples of Tivar to those in Preveza was cultural development. The western Balkans was notoriously polyglot, with no real linguistic core. "Greek," "Albanian," or "Bulgarian" were spoken in so many varieties that without a serious investment in language standardization, any project that hoped to consolidate state authority in the area would fail.[18] Indeed, Ottoman Tosk and a few Geg reformers focused on several occasions to writing grammars and creating curricula that could help the standardization of language in the region.[19]

While it is perfectly understandable for post-Ottoman observers to link nationalist sentiments to the activities of the Frashëri brothers in respect to their early efforts to establish, in October of 1879, the Society for the Publication of Albanian Writing, these efforts in Istanbul need to be put into a larger context as well.[20] These educated men, for the most part trained in the same schools and socialized in the same circles, had a firm set of beliefs as to what the Ottoman Empire should be working toward. They were all, bluntly put, cultural snobs who were contemptuous of the uneducated masses. To them, education was of central import: a marker that separated a civilized person from an uncivilized one, a distinction that has had enduring consequences on how society was organized and where authority lay. In the words of Filip Shiroka, a prominent *Gegë* living in Beirut:

> Shqipëtari në kohë të ushtrisë asht trim i rreptë, por trimnia nuk moston me larue kombin; duhet dhe mësimi, e kombi jonë ka nevojë të madhe për mësonjëtore, sepse kemi metun tepër mrapa kah ana e mësimit e me arsye kombet [*sic*] tjera na thrasin barbar. Mësimi na çil menden e na ban me ecun në udhë të drejtë, me jetue me ner e me erz, mësimi derpton zemrën e na ban me pasë dhim njeni për tjetrin, na ban me ia ditë kimetin gjytetit tonë, prindëve tonë dhe bamirsve tonë; mësimi na çil sytë e na ban me pa se si janë larue kombet e gjytetet tjera e na nep gajret dhe na me i marrun mrapa e me i përgja atyne.

> In a time of war Albanians/*Shqiptarë* are known as brave soldiers, but bravery is not enough to cultivate a community: education is also needed, and our community is especially in need of schools because we are being left behind to such an extent that others rightly call us barbarians. Education opens our minds and allows us to walk a straight path, live in honor and dignity; education fills our hearts with compassion for each other and helps us appreciate our place [in the world], our parents and our beneficiaries; education opens our eyes and makes us see how other communities and civilizations grew, and it lends us the wisdom to follow their lead and become like them.[21]

Obviously, it is not only in government reports where one finds the discourse of something akin to Western-style colonial elitism at work. As seen in Shiroka's letter above, with this growing agenda of state expansion, a discourse of empire, power, and legitimacy soon emerged and spilled over into the wider Ottoman society. Attached to new institutions and a bureaucratic spirit was a strong campaign in the media. In official regional newspapers such as *Prizren*, the project to expand state authority by breaking down local structures of power becomes evident. To the newspaper's contributors, establishing a sense of belonging to something larger than the local community was predicated on a discourse of civilization (*medeniyet*) and the lack thereof (Berkes 1998: 209–262). In other words, to be properly modern meant that local affiliations based on the village group, extended families, or folk religious association needed to be erased by a larger, in the words of prominent members of the western Balkan cultural elite, "Islamic" civilization (Çalık 1996: 87–139; Hoxha 1998: 69–72). Here the first manifestations of "Albanian" identity are evoked, linking large tracts of the Balkans with the Ottoman state (Kaleshi and Kornrumpf 1967: 231–234).

In the throes of a far more traumatic crisis facing the peoples of the Ottoman western Balkans in 1878, the Catholic Pashko Vasa warned European policy makers busy redrawing the boundaries of the Balkans against simplistic generalizations based on assumed ethnoreligious affiliations. While he was making an impassioned plea to the larger world not to allow the dismemberment of the Ottoman territories after the empire's military setback to the Russians in 1877, his method of argumentation proved unusual.

The heart of his plea was based on a greater sensitivity to how the inhabitants in the affected areas orientated themselves vis-à-vis the rest of the world. In this case, Pashko Vasa asserted that a more scrupulous attention must be paid to the specific sensibilities of the inhabitants of a larger geographic area conjoining territories that encompassed much

of the Adriatic coast from Tivar (present-day Bar in Montenegro) and Preveza (in present-day southern Epirus, Greece) and its hinterland, all the way to Niš and Kosovo. As Pashko Vasa understood it, part of being more sensitive to local concerns was to get the terminology right. In explaining, for example, who were the "Albanians," or more accurately, "*Shqypetâre*" (written today as *Shqiptarë, Shqiptar* is its singular form), Pashko offered to his European interlocutors a revealing assessment of how people would react to certain geographic terms used in the forthcoming Berlin Congress:

> Si on arrête le premier paysan que l'on récontre [*sic*] et qu'on lui demande: Qu'est ce que tu es? Il répondra: Je suis *Shqypetâre* tout court. Cette réponse est donnée invariablement tant par ceux de la haute que par ceux de la basse Albanie [from Bar to Preveza], qu'ils soient musulmans, catholiques ou orthodoxes. Si on leur parle d'Epire ou d'Albanie ils croiront qu'on leur parle chinois ou qu'on leur adresse quelque insulte en langue étrangère et ils pourront se croire offensés. (Wassa Effendi 1879a: 20)

In other words, Pashko Vaso—a preeminent figure in Albanian *Rilindja* (renaissance) literature of the late nineteenth century and the future governor of Mount Lebanon—reminds a targeted European audience that the use of local vernacular is crucial to appreciating the aggregate associations the inhabitants of this vast region extending from Bar to Preveza make. This region is not inhabited by "Albanians" or "Epirots" but "*Shqypetâre*." By insisting on the use of local vernacular, it is understandable how many would conclude Pashko Vasa was simply stating the fact that people within these geographic parameters self-identified in a uniform way (Iseni 2008: 192–195). In Pashko Vasa's work, however, it is questionable whether or not we can so easily retrofit nationalist intentions. As we have already seen, his famous poem *O moj Shqypni* certainly has all the elements of a nationalist foundational text. The only problem is that he wrote this verse years before events in the region would establish the coercive atmosphere necessary to force people to compromise their personal and local interests to accommodate a collective post-Ottoman "nationalist" project. In other words, the problem with using this period's work as evidence of nationalism is that it takes Pashko Vasa's polemic out of context.

What the scholarship often fails to do is locate Pashko Vasa in Ottoman society (Bala 1989). As we have already seen, he was a prominent Ottoman official. Strangely, this significant piece of biographical information does not seem to influence how scholars interpret his

poems specifically, and his activism more generally. As a high-ranking Catholic Ottoman bureaucrat, for instance, Pashko Vasa was heavily involved in the operations of the empire and at important points legitimized many of its policies. As reforms began to take the form of the *Tanzimat* and much of the state's effectiveness was open to reinterpretation, men such as Pashko Vasa secured a vital role as local intermediaries by climbing the bureaucratic ladder, not undermining the state. As we will see below, at the time he wrote the poem *O moj Shqypni*, the turmoil in the Balkans created conditions that ultimately led to the creation of independent states. Rather than exploiting the chaos to advocate for Albanian separatism, however, Pashko Vasa was at the center of efforts to keep the Ottoman Balkans together.

A clear indication of his recognized loyalty to the Ottoman enterprise was the fact that the sultan appointed him as the *Mutasarrif* (governor) of Mount Lebanon in 1882, years after he wrote the long-assumed "nationalist" poem *O moj Shqypni*. The western Syrian region faced the same kind of intra- and intercommunity tensions that were threatening to tear the Balkans apart, and the sultan clearly trusted Pashko Vasa to staunch the bleeding of the historically mixed communities in and around Mount Lebanon (Khatir 1967: 118–120).[22]

Taking this into consideration, I suggest that rereading his poem makes it clear that he was asking his compatriots not to allow the ills that had begun to plague Lebanon and Bosnia to befall his heterogeneous homeland in northern *Gegalık/Gegëni*, which by 1877–1878 became the new frontline for the empire.

Çonju, shqyptar, prej gjumit çonju,	Wake up, Albanians, rise from your sleep
Të gjith si vllazën n'nji bes shtrëngonju,	Together as brothers swear an oath,
E mos shikjoni kish' e xhamija,	And do not look toward churches or mosques,
Feja e shqyptarit asht shqyptarija!	Albanians' faith is in Albanianness!
Qysh prej Tivarit deri n'Prevezë,	From Tivar until Preveza,
Gjithkund lshon dielli vap edhe rrezë,	Let the sun spread its warmth throughout,
Asht tok e jona, t'part na e kan lan,	It is our land, our ancestors left it to us,
Kush mos na e preki, se desim t'tan!	No one dare touch us, for we will all die!
Desim si burrat qi diqnë motit	Falling like our brave ancestors did
E mos turpnohna përpara Zotit!	So we don't shame ourselves before God![23]

Rereading the poem in such a way may be highly provocative for an Albanian fixated on a post-Ottoman frame of reference—namely, the nation-state and a specifically Albanian national consciousness.

Surely, it is reflexively maintained that a "great man" such as Pashko Vasa was under the sway of a nascent, still inchoate "nationalist" impulsion when he wrote his poem. To the contrary, rather than suggesting separation, he was continuing the *Tanzimat* process of reordering Ottoman societies to better consolidate a sense of common purpose in face of the external threats posed by Russia and private banks. Men such as Pashko Vasa did write in terms of the homeland, this is clear. This poem *was* attempting to stir native passions, but his calls were not those of separatism but of collectivism, a conjoining of interests to shore up the empire's western flank. This entailed inscribing in the population a sense of collective identity that transcended the sectarian markers of distinction that outside powers were cultivating throughout the Ottoman Empire.

As I discussed earlier, this strategy, at least in the western Balkans, originated when a number of Ottoman reformers, including many *Toskë* and several *Gegë*, wanted to smooth over the communal signifiers of difference—religious or "tribal"—increasingly stimulated by outside patronage. To accomplish this, reformers until the 1860s advocated a realignment of the institutions governing the provinces in the hope that they would help create, through educational and economic development schemes, new criteria of association advocated in Pashko Vasa's poem and in different ways by the work of Sami Frashëri, to whom we turn next (figure 2.2).

Sami: The Patriarch of Tosk Cultural and Regional Elitism

It is in an environment of turmoil during the 1870s that the efforts of prominent Ottoman *Arnavutlar* such as the Frashëri brothers become important. While I do not deny that the men discussed in the following two chapters had a fully developed sense of self-identity, I believe that it is useful not to immediately jump to the conclusion that their actions in the 1878–1912 period were unequivocal examples of Albanian separatist nationalism. In particular, I focus attention on the Frashëri brothers for the very reason that they provide an important example of how careful we need to be not to adopt the nationalist rhetoric emerging in the post-Ottoman era. Sami Frashëri's writings, for example, while they are impressive by any account, also prove to be far more engaged in promoting Ottoman unity than is acknowledged today.

From his earliest writings in the 1870s until his death in 1904, Sami probably represents the single most important Ottoman intellectual of the Hamidian period.[24] Contrary to the way he is portrayed today, a close look at his work leaves the impression that he wavered

Figure 2.2 Sami Frashëri (1850–1904), Tosk intellectual in modern garb, with his wife Emine (Photo courtesy: Marubi, circa 1890, permission generously granted by the Albanian Historical Institute/Instituti i Historise, Tirana, Albania).

throughout his adult life with conflicted loyalties (Levend 1969: 114–142). Both Turkish and Albanian historians have made persuasive arguments linking his work to larger exclusivist narratives; their strategies have focused mainly on either ignoring the consequences of studying Sami's entire body of work outside its Ottoman context or, at best, vetting his writings that contravene their particular frame of analysis as mere intellectual anomalies (Bilmez 2003).

It would be a mistake, however, to see Sami Frashëri's "contradictory" loyalties as in any way strange in light of what happened throughout the western Balkans during this period. In fact, as earlier with Pashko Vasha, seeing oneself as sharing a regional heritage with a larger Ottoman identity was not necessarily a contradiction in the late Ottoman period.[25] Instead, Sami's vast body of work on the Ottoman language and the composition of his invaluable encyclopedias all speak of a man firmly embedded in an intellectual current connecting him to like-minded Ottomans and the larger world (Dağlıoğlu 1934).[26] As a result, his purported links with the parochialisms of Albanian nationalism is more a reflection of post-Ottoman cultural politics than a meaningful observation of the context within which he and his political allies were operating at the time.

This brings us back to the disciplinary role of reformers in the Balkans. Sami's early writings all point to an attempt to strengthen the Ottoman Empire by lecturing and, if possible, shaming *Gegë* and especially *Malësorë* for the manner in which they engaged with the world around them. Sami's first serious work, the play discussed below, and his many articles published in Istanbul newspapers all focused on a social engineering theme that reflected the general spirit of his generation: reforming the cultural peripheries of Ottoman society. Moreover, much like the reformers based in the Balkans, the idea of a single regional province (be it *Arnavutluk* or *Prizren*) became central in his mind to protecting what remained of the empire's Balkan territories and preserving its Islamic heritage.[27]

As already noted, the issue of civilization proved central to realizing these reforms, and it would be the task of educated, "civilized" men such as Sami and his brothers to edify the backward regions of the Ottoman Empire on this point. In one of the most celebrated works attributed to Sami he actually discusses at length the differences between *Gegë* and *Toskë* in terms of the savagery that paradoxically helped to preserve archaic forms of authentic Geg culture while the *Toskë* were changed by western civilization.[28] Admittedly, his informative ethnographic studies also emphasized these regional differences.[29] According to Sami, the principal distinction between people alongside their geographic distance was their level of education. Couched in terms of being civilized and uncivilized, Sami clearly delineated the role that subjects of the Ottoman state would play in the reform efforts that energized his generation. Often one finds in his work direct reference to the intellectual and cultural gap that existed between "tribal" highlanders

and his own educated cohort. In this context, Sami used the trope of the quintessential "warrior race" and their cultural tools, revolving around the "*besa*" (or oath sworn "in blood," with which much of the Ottoman public was familiar), to discuss the state's role in shaping Balkan life. In this regard, some of Sami's work introduces a counterintuitive dynamic in which he hoped that *Malësorë* and highland peoples throughout the Balkans would feel obligated to join in the effort of strengthening and unifying the empire's vulnerable northern frontier.

First released in 1874, Frashëri's play *Besa Yahud Ahde Vefa* (*Besa or Testimony of Loyalty*) represents quite vividly this underlying tension in Ottoman elite circles.[30] Particularly among the *Toskë* who made up a significant proportion of the empire's educated elite, the uncultured, brutal, and fearsome highlander was a problem. Sami's play reveals this sentiment inasmuch as it tries to lay down for his audience a stark contrast between the habits and customs of uneducated mountain peasants and people who were cultured, urbane, and part of a structured hierarchy. His characters spell out the dividing line separating civilization from barbarity and imperial demise from the promise of the empire. The tragic lesson of his story is the danger of deviating from a clearly laid out *Tanzimat* plan that suppresses the application of personal and communal law to ensure the exclusive arbitrator role of the state.[31]

For Sami Frashëri and his fellow intellectuals based in Istanbul, the practices of blood honor and strong "clan loyalties" were particularly detrimental to the efforts of the Ottoman state to bring reform to the key frontier districts.[32] This is evident in Sami's play as he blurs the lines normally separating the hero from the villain. One of his main characters, the southern-born Tepeleni Demir Bey (by designation, a gentleman and officer of the state), is used to issue a warning to the audience. One of his own officers, who himself is from a respected city family, threatens the natural hierarchy in the Ottoman society by lusting after a beautiful village girl who is already engaged. Demir Bey warns the audience that the educated, urban, and noble families charged with administering the wild lands should refrain from interfering with the domestic affairs of the "tribal" characters found in the mountains. In other words, one needs to stick to one's social and political circles when it comes to issues of family and romance. As the audience is forewarned, tragedy befalls the region when an impetuous junior ignores Demir Bey's pleas to not mix with the highlanders and pursues the innocent local beauty, whose own loyalties and love (both pure and idealized) rest with a man of her community. In the end,

it is clear to the audience that trouble comes to those who disrupt a pattern of socialization that, while perhaps archaic, still needs to be respected (Sami 1875: 89–100).

Juxtaposed with this message of class boundaries (nicely captured in figure 2.1) is the confrontation between power and injustice that makes Sami's play a helpful tool for studying the entire period. The *Tanzimat* was not meant to bring state power to bear on the wild people of the mountains as much as justice, order, and the straightforward application of the law throughout the empire. While the violence of local justice clearly denotes the necessity for universal legal codes administered by the Ottoman state, it is not just the backward customary law that needs regulation. Demir Bey, the appointed official and powerful landlord of the region, is also culpable in Sami's play. He oversteps his authority when he tries to compel a father to surrender his beautiful daughter to the governor's infatuated officer. While Demir Bey is wise enough to advise his officer not to pursue a shepherd's daughter, he still makes the fatal mistake of acting unjustly toward the father when his officer's impetuous behavior leads the locals to challenge the hierarchy of power. While they should not interact with locals, the moment the latter resist the wishes of the elite, all codes of behavior must take a back seat.

Interestingly, Sami uses the illiterate, simple but proud shepherd to alert the audience to the fact that after the *Tanzimat* reforms there can be no more arbitrary use of power (Sami 1875: 102–105). This is the second side of Frashëri's story: the *Tanzimat* is the mechanism that preserves order, and while respect is due to the class of powerful men, they cannot abuse it by simply imposing demands, especially unreasonable ones such as handing over an engaged daughter to a smitten officer.

Through the mechanism of a stereotypical representation of the form of agreement in highlander societies—the *besa*—Frashëri offers in his play a social formula for integrating *Malësi*, *Gegëni,* and southern highland communities into the Ottoman fold. No longer shall true subjects be loyal to backward ideals and customary laws. Rather, through their "ancient" honor-bound system, they shall declare an oath/*besa* to the empire as a mechanism that will free them from their self-destructive behavior, while also promising them just treatment by enlightened and restrained governors. United under the guidance of the Ottoman state, these simple people could serve a vital role in preserving the homeland (*vatan*): in this context, a vital part of the Ottoman Empire (Ahmed Cevdet 1986: I(V), 185).

In attempting to resolve this dangerous paradox, many reformers believed that the state could entrust in local clergy and local teachers the role of impressing on these people the need to respect the state's law and authority.[33] Unfortunately, for *Tanzimat* reformers such as Pashko Vasa, the new Abdülhamid regime adopted this earlier thinking only intermittently after a series of military disasters led to the creation of independent Serbia and Montenegro as well as to Austria-Hungary's occupation of Bosnia in 1878, discussed in detail in the next two chapters.

The rise of the autocratic Hamidian regime and consolidation of the palace's authority at the expense of a generation of liberal state reformists led to 40 years of give and take in the halls of power and provincial governance. As we will see, in response to the 1877–1878 fiasco, members of the Midhat Pasha generation did not give up, but actively continued to lobby the Porte and then secretly created underground movements to advocate the reinstatement of a policy that reconstituted the western Balkans into a single administrative area dominated by a *Tosk Arnavut* ruling class.[34]

The apparent ascendancy of Pan-Slavism in the Balkans as a result of Russia's military victory rendered obsolete early attempts to secure loosely defined constituencies by way of reconstituting provinces to fit within one administration. The strategy of creating the mega province of *Arnavutluk*, in particular, would ultimately be sacrificed as a new political order in Istanbul followed the palace coup of 1876 and the rise of the new sultan. This new state of reactionaries responded to the nearly total military defeat that was instigated by divisive forces of communalism originating outside the empire—Pan-Slavism and the Megali Idea—with a new strategy for social organization. Abdülhamid's regime would not equivocate and constantly experimented with tactics to disrupt the ability of groups to consolidate influence over vulnerable populations, a strategy *Tanzimat* reformers had once believed would help Istanbul rule the empire more efficiently. What happened in 1877–1878 thus exposes a significant strategic divide within loyal but competing segments of Ottoman society. For those reformers from an earlier generation, still convinced of their vision of a loyal, militarily secure Ottoman Empire based on formally consolidated *millets*, they would have to struggle in opposition while a new generation of impassioned conservatives reacted to local contingencies in a new way. This tension over how to best react to the dramatic shift in fortunes as a result of the 1877–1878 war was the crucial sociopolitical force at work for the last 40 years of Ottoman history (Karpat 2001).

Conclusion

Is it possible to identify historical agents in ways that do not impose associations that have relevance only in certain intellectual quarters before the twentieth century? Clearly, I believe so, but we need to narrow our terminology when writing about the Ottoman era. Applying a more sensitive and accurate terminology to the historical narrative entails differentiating between peoples by the region, town, or village from which they came. This is important because, throughout the late Ottoman period, people self-identified with the town in which they were born and they understood their place in the world in these narrow geographic terms. This is even true of the most committed advocates of the *Osmanlı* spirit.

This is not to argue that there was no *Shqypni* ("Albania" in the northern dialect in which Pashko Vasa most likely wrote and spoke) conceptually in place. Lord Byron, Edward Lear, and others referred to a territory that extended from Arta in the south to Tivar in the north as "Albania," while also distinguishing on nineteenth-century maps "Montenegro," "Herzegovina," "Epirus," "Greece," and "Serbia." For their part, Ottoman geographers made references to large areas of the Balkans in a similar fashion, using terms such as *Arnavutluk*, *Rumeli*, *Karadağ*, and *Serbistan* to designate large territories. But these were not meant to constitute an ethnographic assertion about who lived in these areas. The terminology was general, not precise, and certainly did not mean that people living in these areas saw themselves exclusively as Albanians, Serbs, Greeks, or otherwise. What actually constitutes the collective, shared, and shifting identities of the people living in these areas resulted from a complex interplay of problems, opportunities, and shifting possibilities.

One way of appreciating the entire period from 1839 to 1875 in the western Balkans is to understand the extent to which particular resistance locally organized successfully found a means to avoid direct persecution. To many in the *Malësi*, the simple fact that the mountainous region was so inaccessible, and the male population so adept at fighting to protect their geographically vast territories, helped ensure that the dynamics of government constantly adapted to find a mutually agreeable compromise. Only on rare occasions of Ottoman determination did a local revolt not result in significant concessions. At the same time, the fact that these *Malësi* regions were in some interesting ways accessible to the outside world through itinerate priests-cum-imperial agents, the Catholic and Orthodox Christian inhabitants of these areas became the focus of the growing imperial

competition for influence. The local uprisings that had secured the right for some local clans to create "principalities"—such as Prince Bib Doda of Mirdita (Catholic), Prince Nikola (Montenegro), and among the more mixed, individual *bayraktar* in Kelmendi or Kuçi—clearly point to a continued use of local, state, and international channels of mutual governance.

What starts to change this is the forum by which local politics is engaged in the larger world. In time, the Montenegro/Karadağ/Črna Gora entity, for instance, became a fixture in Russian strategic thinking and was evoked in every treaty between Russia and the Great Powers. The same would hold true for a putative Serbian principality whose competing claimants were the Karadjordjević and Obrenović families. As a result, upon Ottoman insolvency and the emergence of a new set of policy adaptations thrust upon the larger world by Russian expansionism, the working relationship between ascendant claimants to local authority in Montenegro, Bulgaria, and Serbia, as was the case with the creation of the kingdom of Greece in the early 1830s, transformed local politics. Ultimately, it would be the machinations of the Great Powers and the concerns of private banks that secured an exclusivity for entities that became sovereign states. As much as "independence" from the Ottomans had been secured, as we will explore further in Chapter 4, the ambiguities of the New World Order would mean that Serbia, Montenegro, Romania, Greece, and later Bulgaria would now be indebted to the ascendant stakeholders in the modern world, namely, private banks.

While scholars treat the 1875–1878 insurrections and then the war with Russia in the Balkans and Caucasus as just another indication of the empire's inevitable collapse, the Ottomans by the 1870s were actually seeing results from the military, administrative, and economic reforms men such as Pashko Vasa advocated. These regional successes included triumphant military campaigns against insubordinate subjects in Arabia as well as in Bosnia, Bulgaria, and the Serbian and Montenegrin autonomous principalities. At the same time, a newly established parliament that met and instituted important, if short-lived, reform policies in late 1877 also drafted a new constitution. In sum, for Pashko Vasa and his allies, their reforms had produced results and were threatened only by the sudden turn of events instigated by Russian and Austro-Hungarian intrigue, default on loans, and a palace coup that led to the installation of Sultan Abdülhamid II into power in 1876, an event that ultimately shifted the fortunes of the region's *effendiyya* forever (Devereux 1963: 23–44).

Among the more significant changes included the establishment of new states out of old Ottoman territories—Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, Serbia, and Montenegro in 1878. In response, the Ottoman bureaucracy, gutted earlier by the new sultan who wanted to remove the more influential Young Ottomans, started to reapply administrative methods to try once again to enforce social, cultural, political, and economic homogenization. Contrary to the dominant narrative in Balkan historiography, however, the events in the region that seemed to have been in reaction to these "harsh" measures may have been more a part of an interrelated global economic process of imposing apartheid regimes than a natural desire for ethnic and sectarian "purity."[35] As I demonstrate in the next two chapters, the new, often conflicted governments of Montenegro and Serbia and prominent members of the Tosk Ottoman cultural elite over the 1878–1912 period were actually forced to subtly navigate their own heterogeneous populations by utilizing on-and-off again selective pogroms against individual communities, but not entire "peoples." The means of realizing "ethnic" or "religious" purity was simply not possible in the context of the larger regional order, and even Ottoman bureaucrats under the Abdülhamid II regime as well as their local "patriotic" adversaries appreciated this. Neither in the work of the modern bureaucrat nor the voice of the "national hero" do we hear unequivocal calls for an ethnonational state. Rather, as demonstrated with Pashko Vasa's poems, these people evince a considerable anxiety about the reorganization of Ottoman communities. Such anxiety manifested itself most thoroughly with the events in 1875–1881 covered in the next chapter when *Tanzimat*-era elites suddenly find themselves without an empire to run.

3

The Compromised Empire: Ethnicity and Faith under State Power

The Ottoman World Teeters on Destruction

Long reliant on Galatta bankers to help shore up periodic shortages of specie, when Ottoman officials decided to take their first major loan from private European banks during the Crimea war, the imperial state's relationship with the larger world changed forever.[1] By the 1870s, payments on the more than £200 million the empire eventually borrowed put such a strain on the *Tanzimat* government that it defaulted in October of 1875 (Blaisdell 1929: 79–82). The resulting confrontation with a few private banks in Europe put the Ottoman Empire on the same course as Britain and the United States earlier in the century, both of which ultimately lost their financial sovereignty to the privately owned Bank of England and its subsidiaries (Clay 2000: 38–45, 88–112).

This means that, for all their efforts, by the mid-1870s the *effendiyya*'s plan to modernize the Ottoman Empire proved as disjointed as France's efforts to make "Frenchmen" out of their peasants and shepherds (Sahlins 1998; Weber 1976). The empire was in the throes of this financial crisis while also facing the gauntlet of Russian and Austro-Hungarian aggression. Although successfully staving off local revolts in the western Balkans that had been instigated partially by foreign intrigue, the *effendiyya*'s confrontation with the private banks was bringing their ongoing reforms to a halt. As a consequence, the often contradictory exchanges between reform, development, "civilization," and the "people" left the *Tanzimat* generation increasingly disillusioned.

The choice taken by some *effendiyya* to confront these powerful interests led to a shift in the outside world's thinking about the long-term viability of the Ottoman Empire. The loans would have to be paid,

one way or another. If the empire could not pay, it would be broken apart into nation-states—Montenegro, Bosnia, Serbia, Romania, and Bulgaria—which would then be put under strict economic stewardship much as "Third World" countries today are with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).[2] For at least Serbia and Montenegro, political independence would be conditioned on their paying back a significant percentage of that Ottoman debt, which they inherited as a price for "freedom" (Shaw and Shaw 1987: 2: 191). In other words, perpetual financial subordination would be the destiny of the empire and its subjects, regardless of the final political outcome. What was not clear at the time was when and by which mechanism would this take place. After all, the "Eastern Question" still pitted all of Europe's powers against each other and any "move" in the Balkans had strategic repercussions for half a dozen powerful states (Anderson 1966).

It is at the heart of this financial and diplomatic quagmire that the Ottoman power structure temporarily collapsed. As a consequence, a number of small-scale insurrections throughout the 1870s led to large segments of the western Balkans being "cleansed" of its Muslim population.[3] Confronted by this human wave, a series of bureaucratic bottlenecks emerged, exposing internal rivalries that sapped the empire's human and natural resources. Simply put, the internal order of the *effendiyya* class had been broken.

Responding to this disaffection, the same factions that undermined the Porte's ability to rule effectively since the early 1870s became embroiled in a struggle for power within the palace. The result was a succession of internal coups leading to the removal of sultans Abdülaziz I (May 30, 1876) and Murad V (August 31, 1876) and the imposition of the notorious Abdülhamid II (Hanioğlu 2008: 109–118). To add to the empire's problems, the military, showing signs of fragility as factions picked sides in the power struggle between the new sultan and the old *Tanzimat*-era elite, crumbled when facing a sudden Russian invasion. As a consequence, the Russian military swept through the eastern Balkans and Caucasus in 1877 to finally bring the Ottoman Empire to its knees (Reid 2000: 21–42).

In the subsequent weeks and months, the Russian Empire successfully imposed on the Ottoman Empire a series of conditions, ultimately resulting in the San Stefano Treaty of March 3, 1878 (*Ayastefanos* in Ottoman). Through the manipulation of geography, ethnography, and cartography, the Russian Empire's latent Pan-Slavic ambitions were finally realized with the creation of a Greater Bulgaria, the establishment of Serbia and Montenegro as independent states, and the complete annexation of Wallachia (Jelavich 1991: 143–177).

As is often noted in the historiography, locals in the affected provinces responded to San Stefano so violently that they compelled the powers to reconsider. As much the Great Powers feared that the San Stefano treaty advanced Russian power in the Balkans too far, they also recognized the possibility of an uncontrollable spread of resistance if Ottoman authority was not returned in the Balkans. Furthermore, Russia's own hostility to European banks, especially British, made it unlikely that the Tsar's occupation of the Balkans would permit further payments on Ottoman debt to come out of the region. As a result, the Great Powers agreed to restrict Russian advances in a series of meetings hosted by the powerful German chancellor Otto von Bismarck in June of 1878. At the same time, it was agreed that putting the Ottoman Balkans back together again, if in modified form, was in everyone's immediate interests. Critically, in preparation for this "Berlin Congress," Bismarck assigned a partnership role to Ottoman officials willing to assist in streamlining the eventual redrawing of the empire's boundaries (Medlicott 1938: 1–35).

Even if the other Great Powers could not permit Russia's absolute subordination of the Ottoman Empire, thereby forcing the parties to renegotiate in Berlin that summer, the damage to the *Tanzimat* period was done. The Ottoman *effendiyya* elite openly condemned the new Hamidian regime for basically agreeing to surrender the Balkans to Russia with the signing of the two treaties in the first half of 1878. But the truth was that it was they who failed. Unfortunately for the Young Ottoman elite who were trying to protect their power, the never-ending factionalism that precipitated all this eventually undermined the ability of Midhat Pasha and his allies to bully the young sultan to do their bidding. As a result, these once powerful reformers failed to ensure the survival of a constitution and parliament that they had recently created to preserve their role in the empire. For this self-elevated society of men, as much as for the inhabitants in Eastern Anatolia and Balkans whose homelands became part of new, self-declared "Christian" states, the 1875–1878 period was a disaster.

At the same time, however, San Stefano/Berlin and the years that followed opened up the gates of opportunity for a large number of inhabitants in the Balkans who had sat previously on the margins. Among those suddenly thrust into the role of agent were the refugees flooding into newly consolidated "safe zones" within which food, shelter, and Ottoman sovereignty could still be presumed (Pllana 1985; Uka 2004). As is usually the case in such situations, out of these new communities of misery emerged some of the region's leaders for

the next 40 years. I will introduce two such leaders—Ali of Gusi and Isa Boletini—in the next chapter.

It would not only be the refugees who adapted however. The communities forced to accommodate these hundreds of thousands of refugees changed, too. Old political networks transformed into new associations that bonded both the refugees and subsequent government bureaucracies within a new "borderland" dynamics. Amid all of this, many of the same *Tanzimat*-era political and intellectual elite who were largely responsible for the debacle also became involved in the post–San Stefano events. It is on this last group that this chapter focuses.

Historians eager to identify the origins of the requisite "national rebirth" in the Balkans have overinterpreted the events following the imposition of new frontiers in 1878 by constantly associating the ambitions of the actors in strictly ethnonational terms. Often, the "Berlin Congress" period is also treated as a single event when in fact there were very different, and mostly distinct, dramas taking place in reaction to the sudden change of fortunes among the Ottoman Empire's many western Balkan communities. If we actually put into context each event during the entire 1878–1881 period, it becomes clear that the "resistance" of men and women against the many new borders cannot be interpreted as being driven by collective "nationalist" sentiments.

I wish to offer here a different explanation for what happened to some of these *effendiyya* as they stumbled into the post–San Stefano world. Looking specifically at the roles played by the three Frashëri brothers—Abdyl, Sami, and Naim—along with an almost entirely different kind of political entrepreneur—Ismail Qemali—in the last part of this chapter, I will expose very dissimilar attempts by these natives of *Toskalık/Toskëri* to harness the events of 1877–1878 for the purposes of serving their distinct, and rapidly changing, agendas. In offering this comparison, I claim that it is possible to identify diverse experiences of "modernity" as they unfold in the decades after San Stefano. Such insight should prove important in the context of scholarship that has lionized these men for seemingly unambiguous "nationalist" roles. The fact, however, that they took quite different, and often contradictory, approaches to dealing with events says a great deal about the complexity of individual and group "agency" in the late Ottoman era and the poor analytical value of looking at these events through the prism of nationalism.

The incongruity of the prominent Tosk actions also highlights the quite different set of interests that animated the ambitions of the western Balkan populations. The "victims" ultimately saw the world in such different ways that they proved to be on a different path of

modernity. This constituted a parallel trajectory that at once frustrated the self-appointed leaders of the western Balkans seeking to control them as well as forced the likes of the Frashëri brothers or Ismail Qemali to adjust, often by completely disengaging with those we are told today were their religious or ethnic brethren.

Opportunities out of Disaster

Almost immediately after it became clear that Ottoman boundaries were to be redrawn by Russia's swift military victory, an explosion of community action and individual lobbying took place. For instance, in March 1878, only a few days after the signing of the San Stefano Treaty, Pashko Vasa initiated several meetings with, among others, the British ambassador in Istanbul. In these meetings, Pashko Vasa called for an immediate reconsideration of what constituted "the true Bulgaria" in face of irrefutable demographic facts:

> La Russie, favorisée par sa victoire, ne semble disposée à tenir compte ni de l'histoire, ni de l'ethnologie des pays, que d'un trait de plume, ou pour mieux dire d'un coup d'épée, elle veut annexer au nouvel Etat qu'elle crée au profit de l'élément Slave, sous le nom de Bulgarie . . . La vraie Bulgarie, malgré le vague de sa signification, ne saurait s'étendre en deça [*sic*] des Balkans. Mais en admettant même qu'à cause de l'agglomération des populations Bulgares sur plusieurs districts sis [*sic*] en deçà des Balkans la Russie veuille les faire bénéficier des résultants de ses victoires, il n'est rationnellement possible d'admettre que des centres ou des populations Musulmanes, Albanaises, Grecques, et Koutzo-Vallaques, sont en majorité, ou même égales, puissant être réclamés comme Bulgares et englobés dans le nouvel Etat que la Russie s'est proposé de créer.[4]

Similar to Pashko Vasa's plea, a committee of concerned residents making their case to the European powers offered a well-composed argument that the areas being ceded pursuant to Russian demands were inhabited not exclusively by Bulgarians but also by, among others, "Šops, Turks, Greeks, Armenians, Jews, Pomaks, Tshitaks, Vlachs, Albanians, Germans, Tatars, Cherkess [Circassians], and Tsiganes [Gypsies]." In addition, the committee members reminded European diplomats that the Muslims of the region were not immigrants (suggesting a persistent trope at the time that all Muslims were of Anatolian origin) but indigenous to the area.[5] Importantly, in demanding that religious liberty, the right to own land, and political freedom be granted to everyone, not just Slav Christians, these

committees were evoking the very principles that self-identified Europeans used to justify their intervention in the Balkans (Pollo and Pulaha 1978: 11–122). Just in case soliciting outsider sympathies on the basis of universal values did not work, however, local committees had a much older repertoire of tactics on which they could rely.

In addition to the pleas for understanding were threats of violence if the Russian plans were not thwarted (Skendi 1967: 33–35). Although this has been generally interpreted by historians today as the unified front of like-minded advocates of a "Greater Albanian consciousness" (Prifti 1978: 15–26; Schirò 1904: 48–49), the protests during the early months of 1878 need to be appreciated outside the framework of what would happen in the twentieth century. In short, the community activism highlighted by historians as indicators of "spontaneous nationalism" is unique neither to the region nor to the period.[6]

Indeed, these famous meetings being held throughout Kosova were largely the result of Ottoman state representatives traveling to the region under orders to "consult" with the region's trusted *bayraktar*. Concerned community leaders traveled from as far away as Shkodër to attend the meetings between government representatives and those directly affected by the proposed territorial swaps.[7] In this setting, it is easy to understand why most of those who came to attend these "consultations" agreed that the old order was greatly preferable to the present fragmentation introduced by Great Power intervention. Thrown into such a cauldron of conflicting interests, factions supported by the Ottoman state surfaced over the subsequent weeks and months. Under the "guidance" of the laws of the state, so interpreted local judges on behalf of Istanbul, delegates from various districts pledged support for an agenda that, at the time and over the next few years, called for direct state action to stop both the annexation of Ottoman land and, more important, permit the return of refugees to their original homelands in neighboring Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Niš.[8] In light of this analysis of the documents, it is important to stress that while nationalist historians of the twentieth century have chosen to interpret these declarations as patriotic gestures (read separatist), they conveniently leave out the tension between locals and the tens of thousands of refugees threatening local order. Put simply, a larger number of community leaders in Kosova and surrounding areas directly impacted by the flood of tens of thousands of refugees were more likely to solicit Ottoman government support than adopt anachronistic "nationalist" and "separatist" stances.

As was becoming clear from these activities in the early months of 1878, one particularly crucial set of actors emerging at the

intersections of power was the wave of Catholic *Gegë* and Muslim (*Gegë*, Slavs, Circassians, Turks, and others) refugees expelled from many parts of Herzegovina, northern Bosnia, and southern Serbia.[9] What these refugees (*muhacir*) accomplished by reconstituting themselves in the Kosovar communities that were forced to accommodate them proves to be one of the most important examples of parallel trajectories of modernity suggested in this book. By the summer of 1878, for example, many refugees radicalized by their experiences of expulsion and economic ruin took matters in their own hands.[10] To a large extent marginalized by their hosts in northwestern Kosova, which was subdivided regionally—Drenica (Rahovec, Suha Reka, Lipjan, Mitrovica, Klina) and Dukagjin (Peja, Gjakova, Prizren)—and by families/*fis*, these "foreign" refugees demanded a voice in the various "committee" meetings adjourned to supposedly address their concerns.

As they waited for acknowledgment from locals, tens of thousands of refugees took measures to ensure that they were properly accommodated. They often, for example, confiscated food stores in towns as the overwhelmed local contingents of the Ottoman army watched. They also appropriated rich farmland and forests to accommodate the homeless thousands being pushed from one region to another. Ignored in the scholarship, these acts of survival by desperate refugees constituted a serious threat to the established Kosovar communities. The leaders of these communities thus spent considerable efforts lobbying the sultan to do something about the refugees, tangentially meaning something about the larger regional crisis.[11]

The government response proved inconsistent, often confused, and largely ineffective. Some local officials did try to mobilize the leaders of these newly reconstituted communities and, to prevent civil war from breaking out, by redirecting the refugees' anger outward. At first, this translated into organized gestures of resistance to the Berlin Congress, something diplomats on the ground observed with great interest (Bajrami 2009: 31–38). In time, Sultan Abdülhamid II's regime made more concrete overtures to these emerging groups, hoping to demonstrate that his regime was prepared to invest some political capital into harnessing the frustrations of the empire's unfortunate victims of Russian victory. The eventual creation of "unionist" committees, again mistaken in the literature as being strictly nationalists, thus reveals a far more intricate dynamic linking a number of local activists with state bureaucracies at the local and central levels. In other words, who was co-opting whom proves difficult for the historian to fully discover by simply keeping to the old terminology.

To many people, the new European-dominated world and their reactions to it made sense in the context of a struggle for home. After all, every diplomatic effort made to find a "peaceable end" to the crisis was for refugees a step away from getting back to their homes in Niš, Bosnia, and Herzegovina. Violence, therefore, was as much a tool of persuasion as a means to getting back home. It is important to stress that this violence was not centrally coordinated, but the result of very different peoples reacting to often very different situations. In other words, we will not be able to associate individual events with a guided nationalist agenda as it is often framed in the scholarship.

The events in the spring and summer of 1878 thus constituted an important set of occasionally intersecting channels of opportunity and power. Perhaps the single most important issue facing all the parties with a stake was the fact that locals victimized by the borders would not cooperate with either the state or individuals assuming a leadership role. Indeed, because of an influx of tens of thousands of refugees into, for example, Kosova and Montenegro (*Malësi*), events quickly changed, with multiple examples of spontaneous actions and reactions threatening to destabilize the entire region (Şimşir 1989).

In the end, many acts of resistance to the protocols of European diplomacy were taking the shape of different uprisings that, until then, had been seen by two distinct factions in Istanbul as strictly a "local problem" that the Ottoman state can either manipulate or suppress. Those aloof in the imperial capital would soon take notice, however, when actions taken by these refugees began to transform the distribution of local power.

The Sultan Reaches Out: Mehmed Ali Pasha's Mission

Initially unable to secure state assistance, many among both refugee and host communities resorted to violence as a means of attracting officials' attention in order to protect their collective and individual interests. The result was an explosion of small-scale, localized acts of violence that increasingly undermined any possibility of harnessing these forces for the purposes of redirecting them either against Ottoman bureaucratic negligence or Great Power arrogance. In short, Kosova and its neighboring districts were on the verge of political and economic collapse.[12]

Things really started to spiral out of control when locals realized that the European powers would refuse to modify their positions laid out prior to the completion of the Berlin Congress. Despite petition after petition from the people directly affected by decisions made in Berlin during the summer, European authorities continued

to ignore the consequences of their acts. Clearly none of the Great Powers appreciated the depth of the problem and ultimately assumed that the Ottoman military could enforce compliance when necessary. Crucially, this was an assumption that Ottoman delegates to the Berlin Congress (June to July 1878) sought to reinforce out of fear that otherwise, outside forces would be sent in to complete the transfer of territory Istanbul proved unwilling to do on its own.

As news of the formal plans to hand over large areas of Kosova/Işkodra to newly established Montenegro/Serbia surfaced during the spring of 1878, communities in these targeted areas organized a plethora of armed units to resist. Over time, some of these groups coalesced around a growing, internally, and loosely organized cluster of committees known in the literature as the Prizren League (*Lidhja e Prizrenit* in Albanian). These local actions immediately became the center of attention for such men as Istanbul-based Abdyl Frashëri, representatives of the Ottoman state, and outside powers who all desperately wanted to take control of (or exploit) the situation.[13]

Long seen as the quintessential nationalist moment, it is important to stress that the *Lidhja* actually consisted of a loose coalition of community leaders and their supporters who ultimately failed to lobby the various powers in a uniform voice.[14] Indeed, as already intimated, this cluster of activists had little in common. Those who participated in the various meetings starting about a week before the opening of the Berlin Congress represented a wide sampling of the larger western Balkans: *Gegë* from Işkodra, Yakova, Prizren, and Ipek, as well as *Malësorë* Catholics and Muslim Slavs, and Turks.[15] Considering the variety of participants as well as the varying sense of urgency each delegate expressed, ranging from calculating among local landowners to outright panic for the refugees, participants in these meetings had a difficult time finding common ground.[16]

As Malcolm (1998: 220–222) and Gawrych (2006: 47–48) correctly note, the demands the affected community representatives ultimately made of the outside world remained parochial compared with what post-Ottoman historians assert. Far from being the collaborative effort of a well-formed "nationalist" movement, factions emerged that resulted in violence directed at each other, the Ottoman state, and only in specific cases, the forces of "occupying" armies. That being said, while not as widespread as usually claimed, the reports of isolated clashes between Ottoman troops and locals in parts of western Kosova (Dukagjin) and throughout the *Malësi*, nevertheless, put the Ottoman state into panic mode. Both these regions within the larger Balkans had a history of insubordination that could have

easily been exploited by outsiders seeking to expand the territorial reach of competing Austro-Hungarian and Russian-allied regimes. In response, Istanbul sent a delegation led by Mehmet Ali Pasha, the one Ottoman official who had knowledge of local conditions and hence some sympathy for the inhabitants of the *Malësi*. Tragically for him, he was asked to support policies that he had wholly opposed while a delegate at the Berlin Congress.[17]

Despite his opposition to the treaties that led to the formal separation of long-held Ottoman lands, Mehmet Ali Pasha followed orders and toured western Kosova's unsettled towns. His message was apparently incoherent, contradicted by the facts on the ground. In the end, he was left pleading with the many thousands who came to hear him to respect the needs of the whole Ottoman state, not just those of the local community. Unfortunately, Mehmet Ali Pasha's message of unmitigated loyalty to an Ottoman state willing to concede vast territories ultimately cost him his life. On September 6, 1878, a mob massed in the town of Gjakova/Yakova and killed him, his official entourage and, more important, his local host.[18]

The death of Mehmet Ali Pasha and his local Gjakova/Yakova host, Yakovalı Abdullah Pasha, highlights a number of distortions in western Kosovar society at the time. First, the influx of many desperate people, rather than the kind of nationalist outrage usually portrayed in the literature, changed considerably the way local affairs were conducted in Kosova during the crisis. For one, the participants in meetings with Mehmet Ali Pasha reportedly held conflicting interests. The same discordant voices that debated the merits of letting arrogant members of the Istanbul opposition speak on their behalf (see below) were similarly divided on how to receive the sultan's diplomatic emissary. Perhaps surprisingly, many of Mehmet Ali Pasha's interlocutors in Kosova, especially landowners and established community leaders, actually shared the concerns of the government.[19] After all, many prominent community leaders from as far away as Mat, Mirdita, and Shkodër traveled for days to have the opportunity to meet with the sultan's representative in order to coordinate their tactics, not to fight the world alone. In addition to the many *bayraktar* eager to steer Ottoman state policy, Mehmet Ali Pasha was accommodated by a prominent local landholder who defended his guest to the death, as local custom demanded.[20]

To Yakovalı Abdullah Pasha and many of Kosova's landed elite, the specter of militarily confronting large numbers of armed refugees demanding compensation held no attraction. They wanted the Ottoman state to step in and restore order locally. Indeed, the landed

elite, clergy, and urban merchants who actually made up important factions of the so-called League were personally eager to work with the Ottoman state addressing the diplomatic demands of the Berlin Congress. It was not they, in other words, who killed Mehmet Ali Pasha.

The brutal attack on the house of Abdullah Pasha, the local notable who hosted Mehmet Ali Pasha, represented a breach of all that was sacred in western Kosova. A long-held tradition of respectfully hosting and providing shelter to guests (especially dignitaries sent from Istanbul) meant that this unprecedented attack on Abdullah Pasha by refugees ran foul of an important mechanism designed to ensure the maintenance of local order. The murder of Mehmet Ali Pasha and his highly respected host was understood not only as a simple act of defiance of Ottoman order, nor as the sudden breakdown of local custom, but also as a usurpation of local power. What seems to have developed in Kosova as a result of the San Stefano and Berlin treaties was a sharply divided postwar social and political milieu.[21]

Thinking of the subsequent events with this in mind will help us more accurately understand the local dynamics at play as a new European diplomatic order begins to emerge over the next 20 years. In so doing, we avoid draping everything in nationalist significance. This is especially crucial when considering the activities of some of the most prominent members of the *Tanzimat* era, who, somewhat contradictorily, also happen to be the most celebrated "Albanian" nationalists: the Tosk Frashëri brothers. We will first explore in detail the activities of these Istanbul-based *Toskë* who would try to use the events in Kosova to rally a counterrevolution of sorts and return the *Tanzimat* order to Istanbul.

Toskë Responding to the Post-Kosova Crisis

Abdyl's Mission to Kosova

Barely two years earlier, successive coups brought to power an untested sultan and an increasingly assertive cadre of advisors who seemed intent on wresting power away from the *effendiyya* who had just successfully pushed into law a new constitution and opened Parliament. After military defeat in 1877, the intrigue in Istanbul began to spill over into western Balkan affairs as the new sultan mobilized his young regime to stymie what could have quickly become an ugly confrontation between desperate refugees and their overwhelmed local hosts. At the same time, many members of the Istanbul-based western Balkan

political elite—members of parliament, bureaucrats, and established intellectuals—mobilized to produce a discordant stream of polemic. There was, in other words, opportunity amid the chaos in Istanbul as well as Kosova.

Tellingly, while there was plenty of blame to go around during the latter weeks of 1877 when there was so much hostility toward the conservatives who took over the palace, when the Russian troops were practically at the gates of Istanbul itself, the most vicious criticism was reserved for the tens of thousands of refugees flooding into Kosova, Işkodra, and Manastir. Remarkably, it was Abdyl Frashëri (1839–1892) who seemed to articulate best this open blaming of the "backward" locals.

In front of fellow members of the short-lived Parliament in January 1878, Abdyl declared that the quintessential enemy of modernist/liberal "progress" in Ottoman society was the "ignorance" (*cehalet*) of rural society. It was the purported ignorance of those now streaming into preserved Ottoman territories that accounted for the failures in the Balkans. News of military defeat, in other words, inspired patronizing rants about the lack of "progress" and "civilization" among the victims of war. Abdyl was suggesting that the *Tanzimat* reforms, responsible for the rapid expansion of the Ottoman bureaucracy since the 1840s, were never fully implemented in many parts of the western Balkans. As a consequence, the kind of society that Young Ottomans had long promoted was still years away and the consequences for this "backwardness" was chaos (Gawrych 2006: 45–50).

The speech, which many in the audience reportedly found insulting, set the stage for Abdyl's personal mission for the next few years (Us 1940–1954: II: 145–146). As he and apparently many from within his *effendiyya* cohort saw it, the only antidote available was the kind of social engineering projects devised in the 1860s. Considering that he and his colleagues would soon be without rank in society, the sultan would disband Parliament by February, the task for Abdyl to "do something" about the provinces took on even greater, personal meaning.

For Abdyl, confronted with a reality that Istanbul was now in the hands of a constituency of stakeholders linked to the new sultan (and perhaps unknown outside powers), he elected to "go home" and try to rally the diverse peoples of *Arnavutluk* in the hope of reversing recent trends, not only diplomatically vis-à-vis the rest of the world but also in Istanbul itself. Clearly, the idea behind mobilizing the masses in Kosova, Yanya, and Manstir *vilâyets* had something to do with assisting in the return of the now-marginalized Abdyl and his fellow *Tanzimat* elite to the halls of power. The problem was that the chaos both within the now highly factionalized *effendiyya* class and

in the western Balkans was complete. As Abdyl would soon find out, useful unity in these conditions would prove impossible to create.

The here-today-gone-tomorrow committees popping up in Kosova in the summer months ultimately frustrated members of the Istanbul elite such as Abdyl Frashëri who came to the region with the goal of co-opting the "people." The very incongruent nature of their activist message, a reflection of their not appreciating what the influx of refugees to the provinces of Kosova, Işkodra, and Manastir meant on the ground, left these nonnatives on the margins of local events. After all, the ultimate aims of the many committees created in Kosova were to serve their constituent groups, not be co-opted by arrogant Tosk "gentlemen."[22]

The apparent provincialism of locals and the *Malësorë* attending the numerous meetings in Dukagjin frustrated the sole Tosk at the meetings. In a few weeks, a clash of local sensibilities and needs undermined Abdyl's modernist agenda. Abdyl's evocation of "progress" and "civilization" ultimately fell on deaf ears. In fact, his message had alienated his target audience, leaving him with no recourse but to move to *Toskëri*, where he would thrive as a capable leader for the next decade. The same holds true of his playwright brother, Sami, whose activism in Istanbul during the 1878–1881 crisis will take a considerably different track to make the same civilization argument.

Loyal Sami's Ottoman Vigil

While highlighting the visceral chauvinism of Abdyl and later his brother Naim, it may be useful to contrast these strident voices of Tosk elitism with the youngest member of the Frashëri clan, Sami. His activism during the 1875–1881 crisis period differed quite dramatically from those of his older brothers, who sought to address the rapidly changing "Ottoman," "Bektashi," "Tosk," "Epirus," and "Albanian" questions by traveling throughout the western Balkans and secretly lobbying foreign representatives (even Greece at one point).[23] In the months that followed the Berlin Congress, Sami's contributions to the important publication *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* proved especially effective. Through this newspaper, Sami pleaded to the larger Ottoman society to help defend greater *Arnavutluk* from absorption by neighboring Greece, Montenegro, and Serbia.[24] While Abdyl was doing much the same thing, the presentation style was crucial; Abdyl was arrogant and abrasive, whereas Sami seemed to use his skills as a writer to much better serve the larger Frashëri agenda.

In one of his more important and revealing articles, the argument for the larger empire to care was the region's central place in the empire's

history, economy, and culture.[25] Crucially, others writing in the press concurred with Sami that the western Balkan region was an integral part of the empire.[26] In this respect, Sami was not seen as partisan or parochial; his message of Ottoman union carried considerable weight.

While stressing the need to defend the region, Sami reintroduced the old *Tanzimat*-era argument that creating a mega territory called *Arnavutluk* would serve the long-term interests of the empire. Importantly, Sami emphasized the need for A*rnavultluk*'s educated natives to be the ones to administer the region, what scholars today interpret to mean demands for "autonomy" (Bozbora 1997: 198–199). It is in the context of this argument that between the autumn of 1878 and 1881, Abdyl and Sami initiated the creation of several committees that emphasized political and spiritual union as well as education.[27]

The most active committees set up in the region south of Prizren from November to December of 1878 called themselves "unionist committees in Tosk regions" (*Toskalık Cemiyet-ı Ittihadiyye*). Most likely organized by Abdyl who had already left Kosova in July, the Dibër-based committee evoked Sami's language of empire-wide reform.[28] In an overture to the patriotism and sense of religious duty, members of these committees warned that the loss of the regions in question was just the beginning of a long process of territorial loss and cultural destruction if reforms were not put into effect.

After setting up this unionist committee in Dibër, Abdyl moved further south in search of fruitful exchange with a more sympathetic audience. In Gjirokastër (Ergiri/Argyrokastro) in July 1880, for instance, Abdyl called together prominent Tosk leaders to promote regional consolidation around a new framework that reoriented these communities toward the southern frontiers of the Ottoman Balkans (Skendi 1967: 78–79). In contrast to his utter failure as a "leader" in Kosova, in the heart of *Toskëri*, where he once served in various capacities for the Ottoman state, Abdyl's articulated opposition to Greece's territorial expansionism catapulted him to the center of regional politics.

As Sami understood, Abdyl's experiences back home betrayed the fact that *Arnavutluk* lacked political uniformity; the strong *Toskë* and *Gegë*, let alone individual, divisions needed to be addressed over the long term. Cooperating with the Ottoman state, therefore, became the only viable option for those forming groups to push for reforms in light of recent events. This was a sentiment shared by many, both in Istanbul and in *Toskalık/Toskëri*. For the entrenched land-owning and merchant class who bankrolled much of the Frashëri brother's activities in the period, stability was crucial in face of a sudden shift in regional economic activity and potential threats of further annexation by Greece.[29]

These concerns translated into new kinds of exchanges between the new Hamidian state, a reconciliation of sorts orchestrated in part by Sami.

In this light, it is now possible to explore further the importance of the post-Berlin period's central focus on reforms. Long mistaken as being reforms (*ıslahat*) meant to strengthen exclusively Albanians or Bulgarians, the demands voiced by these committees set up in the western Balkans actually stressed the need for greater state investment in the region, especially education, to help stifle any future attempts to undermine Ottoman authority.[30] In early 1879, for instance, Sami initiated a series of educational programs that appeared to have had the support of the palace. The formal group of prominent *Arnavutlar/Shqiptarë* who created a committee—*Cemiyet-i ilmiyye-i arnavudiyye* (the Society of Learned Albanians)—aimed to establish a universal language for all Ottoman subjects residing in *Arnavudluk* to learn. To help implement a universal language, the committee proposed to direct on behalf of the state all future educational and sociocultural development campaigns in the region.[31]

Considering the overall tensions between the old *effendiyya* and the new sultan, the collaboration between the palace and Sami proves interesting in the larger context of the period. Together, the palace and Istanbul-based *Arnavutlar* activists worked to ensure stability in *Toskalık/Toskëri*, the homeland of most of those participating in Sami's committees. In this spirit, a new period of development began that led to the state directing more attention (and money) to developing a common language (Albanian or Ottoman) for the disparate communities in that part of the western Balkans. As the school was seen as the ideal tool to help realize this homogenization, education in general appeared in Sami's writings.

In this context, Sami's advocacy for expanding the role of "Islamic civilization" in these reforms helps us appreciate the tensions that would ultimately arise between the brothers themselves. Stressing the role *Arnavutlar/Shqiptarë's* played in protecting the Islamic world (stressing the universality of the faith), Sami was clearly aiming to ensure that none of the whisperings about divided loyalties undermined the long-term collaboration plans his committees had for the state. Sami's advocacy for reform, therefore, had to go beyond simply reinforcing Islamic traditions. Rather, Sami began to add to his repertoire an impressive list of apologia for future policies of state centralization that focused on consolidating Ottoman/Muslim identities at the expense of more parochial ones.[32] The themes of "civilization" and collective "backwardness" constantly referred to by Abdyl also appeared in Sami's work.

Sami's emphasis on the need to pull *Arnavutlar/Shqiptarë* out of a "state of ignorance" highlighted the strong role that education and a strong affiliation to Islam (*hamiyet-ı islamiyye*) played into the rhetoric of many western Balkan reformers.[33] By demanding stronger support from the Ottoman political elite, Sami was fusing at least two different trends in reformist circles: the need for the state to "educate" previously ignored populations and inculcating Islam, modernity, and civilization to reinforce loyalty to the regime.[34] He differed from his brothers in that he was not willing to equivocate in respect to the role the Ottomans played in this.

In the larger context, these concerns about religion and education are linked to the parallel Russian attempt at the time to win the loyalties of Slav Orthodox Christians living in the Balkans. Fearful of Russia's long-term gains, the palace and the *Rum* Patriarch joined forces to thwart Russia's expansion.[35] In yet another seeming contradiction, because *Rum* church authorities felt Russian polices, manifested both in the treaties that resulted in the creation of independent Slav Orthodox states and new Russian money for local education, posed a serious threat to the *Rum* church's regional hegemony, it actually devised policies with the Ottoman state to suppress local Christians.[36] Part of this campaign to keep the Russians at bay was the Ottoman state and the *Rum* church's efforts to fortify loyalties throughout *Toskëri* by constructing schools (Dako 1919: 23–25; Külçe 1944b: 247–264). As I demonstrate further in Chapter 5, this collaboration would only go so far. For the Ottoman state, occasionally working with the sizable group of western Balkan advocates in Istanbul, this new policy to build schools in collusion with locals helped balance off the *Rum* church's own agendas. The consequences of these fluid conditions are best explained by looking into detail the evolution of Naim Frashëri (1846–1900) as Bektashi's greatest champion of the last 30 years of Ottoman history.

Bektashism and Tosk Exceptionalism

The history of the Bektashi as a persecuted Muslim sect is well known. The fact, however, that its members enjoyed so much influence in the affairs of the empire suggests that it would remain a social and cultural reality well after its official eradication in 1826. From their new western Balkan base of exile, Bektashis began a process of political reorientation that ultimately fit the needs of locals wishing to remain integrated in the expanding state bureaucracy (Clayer 1994: 21–34; Kaleshi 1980). In time, what had once been a universal spiritual order

in a larger Ottoman context became increasingly seen by prominent Tosk intelligentsia as a religious order servicing their immediate community interests. Deeply engaged in opportunistically forging strong cross-sectarian links with Tosk Orthodox Christians and Greek nationals, men such as Abdyl and Naim Frashëri, Ismail Qemali, and Abidin Pasha Dino not only played an active role in promoting a particularistic self-identification that today is called nationalism but also promoted religious and cultural syncretism that, by the end of the nineteenth century, blurred the distinction between Orthodox Christianity and their form of Bektashism (Clayer 1990).

This uniquely Tosk cultural formula betrays a powerful regionalism that existed in some quarters of the late Ottoman Balkans that I believe Sami was especially keen on erasing. Ironically, it is in Naim's poetry and published advocacy that we may find this regionalism most prominently. As noted by many, Naim's work is heavily geared toward exploring creatively life as a member of an outlawed Muslim sect (Clayer 1990; Elsie 2005). This theme would by the 1890s serve as the foundation to a narrative of commonality that eventually developed into the kind of regionalism that crippled attempts by Ottoman and later Albanian loyalists to unify disparate communities in the first half of the twentieth century (Pepo 1962: 88–89, 120).

Naim and Abdyl's somewhat linked trajectories away from collaboration outside narrowly defined communities thus poses some interesting challenges to our generic narrative about the modern Balkans. While Sami, working for a universal solution to the Ottoman Empire's vulnerabilities through the prism of a universal Islam, sustained his statesmen sobriety until his death, his two brothers were clearly moving into a new phase of political advocacy, one that is best characterized as Tosk self-isolation. More than ever, a regional parochialism started to shape the political dynamics of the western Balkans. The more advocates explored ideas of a "Balkan Federation," separate unions with Greece, Bulgaria, and Romania at the expense of the Ottoman state, the more Sami and his brand of loyalists stressed the importance of Islam as a unifying force (Karpat 2001: 9–15; Sami 1884: 179–184).

This stress on Islamic orthodoxy and Islamic civilization pushed Naim, a fiercely dedicated deciple of Haci Bektashi's sect, to publicly champion the resurgence of his order, ostensibly to counter what he understood to be rise of Islamic orthodoxy advocated by Sami. To Naim, Bektashism's precarious status in the Hamidian state compelled members of the community to orientate their political values as part of an underground, opposition movement, not embrace a "Sunni" orientation stressed by the state (Deringil 1990). Indeed, by the end

of the century, the Bektashi *tekkes* (house of worship) found in much of *Toskalık/Toskëri* operated in a quasi-clandestine state (Kressing 2002).

As often occurs in such situations, a combination of fear of persecution and an ensuing self-righteousness served as a homogenizing factor for this community. To Naim, this solidified community of often very powerful members of the Ottoman cultural, economic, and political elite would have to articulate new demands of their Ottoman compatriots. The political weakness that contributed to the continued territorial encroachments on his family's homeland—Yanya/Janina/Epirus—and the empire's financial bankruptcy collectively translated into a pronounced ideological entrenchment that only intensified political and cultural alienation.

In time, Naim's advocacy for hardened lines of distinction between Bektashism and the corrupted outside world would constitute the only source of unity for many Ottoman *Toskë*. Indeed, from the perspective of the powerful landowning class who bankrolled Naim's increasingly virulent form of political advocacy, the chaos affecting Geg-populated regions of the Balkans and the relative weakness of the empire as a whole left these southerners little option but to explore new avenues of social and political action. It is within the Bektashi community that we observe, for instance, a formal solidification of larger, transregional affiliations that linked the southern Balkans and Istanbul to Egypt (see below).

When revisiting Naim's body of work, we therefore also observe that he spoke for a reanimated Bektashi-Tosk community. This angle to the message would prove crucial to the further development of regional schisms that made it politically impossible to unify the Balkans after 1878.[37] Unlike Sami's Islam, Naim advocated disengaging the fortunes of *Toskë* from the fate of the Ottoman state's continued administration of the western Balkan region. This did not necessarily mean, however, that his reconfigured community should seek a larger "Albania." Rather, *Toskë* would demonstrate a strong sense of independence from the northern regions of the Ottoman Balkans, even to the point of, as we saw in Abdyl's case, forming parallel committees at the height of the Berlin Congress crisis. These alternative, local groups simply stopped focusing on sending help to the besieged northern communities. Instead, Naim and his allies lobbied to direct these considerable resources to protect *Toskëri* from any negative spillover from the north. To Naim, in other words, "Albanians" meant a constituency that was dramatically less inclusive than the scholarship today leads us to believe.[38]

More important than a divergent advocacy for political unity among the inhabitants of the western Balkans was Naim's remarkable hostility toward other Muslim sects. The late-nineteenth-century Bektashi polemic against Sunnis was manifested in pronouncements that marked not only the sectarianism that we understand so well today but also the subtle claims that *Gegë, Arabs, Turks, and other Muslims* needed to be subordinate to Tosk intellectual guidance. Ostensibly, *Toskë* no longer saw it possible to exist beyond the Balkans in a larger Ottoman world that favored Sunni orthodoxy. Naim Frashëri in particular began to write more frequently about the unique qualities of Bektashi beliefs, even suggesting that it was more "European" than "oriental," on account of the *Toskë* 's close links with Hellenism, their "Aryan qualities" and their "freethinking" (Clayer 2006: 474–493). It is not a coincidence that these evolving tensions between increasingly self-identifying "orientals" and "Europeans" became dominant intellectual themes in late Ottoman society as revealed in a book attributed retroactively to Sami Frashëri (Kolonja 1899).

While I dispute the book's authorship, it is nevertheless an interesting polemic thrown in the middle of a debate within Ottoman intellectual circles that suggests that new tensions shaped the post-*Tanzimat* era. The author(s) of *Shqipëria. Ç'ka qenë, ç'është e ç'do bëhetë?* identifies "Turks" as a "nation of savages" originating from Asia that laid waste to the civilized world. The book further argues that *Arnavutlar* are "not Turks" but members of the "oldest nation in Europe who have more right to the land than any other nation."[39] These are words hardly fitting a pronounced Ottomanist such as Sami, who continued to publish on his beloved Ottoman civilization well after the appearance of this book. For readers, however, regardless of whether Sami wrote it or not, the sentiment is clear. By the 1890s, important members of the Tosk elite in Bucharest/Sofia were showing signs of separatism that unambiguously adopted chauvinism as a tool.

Recognizing this often contradictory and perhaps schizophrenic dynamic, I suggest abandoning any presumption of unity on the basis of ethnicity or religion; the Tosk Bektashi elite revealed a regionalism that mirrored a similar process taking place in the rest of the Balkans and larger Europe until 1912. This regionalism reflected a belief by some that small pockets of the homeland are the regenerative source of power, not a collective that required sharing that power with irredeemable "mountain savages." Likewise, these advocates for a strong local administration formed part of a small cadre of urban-based elites ready for the task of building a new state from the provinces inward.[40]

In time, this evolving sense of Tosk separation strengthened to the point where Geg overtures for solidarity akin to modern patriotism in 1906 were coolly rejected. The extraordinary incident reported by an Italian consul, some 30 years after Abdyl failed to commandeer the disparate communities in Kosova, reflects how narrowly self-identified Bektashi interpreted their political, cultural, and economic horizons.[41] As noted by the Janina-based Italian consul, a Geg emissary from Prizren traveled to Gjirokastër/Ergiri in an attempt to mobilize Bektashi leaders behind a common struggle against the increasingly discredited Ottoman state. The resulting failed mission not only spoke of a vast gap between regional sensibilities but also suggests a tone of animosity that makes sense only when revisiting the works of Naim Frashëri more closely.[42]

In stark contrast to Pashko Vasa's emphasis in 1878 on blurring sectarian lines discussed in the last chapter, there appears to be a new set of motivations within *Toskë* reformist groups that contradict earlier efforts, including by Sami, to help to consolidate the authority of the Ottoman state. The evangelical message of Naim Frashëri, in particular, begins to openly confront Sunni Muslim icons when he writes to his Tosk Bektashi readers. His hostility to Sunnis indicates another level of chauvinism among some *Toskë* that must cause us to pause before generalizing about the activities and motivations of these people.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, affiliates of the Bektashi order in *Toskalık/Toskëri* were busy translating into *Toskërisht* some of the more important and popular texts used in daily religious practice in the region. For example, Dalip Frashëri, an uncle of the famous Frashëri brothers, translated Fuzuli's *Hadiqatu-Suʿada* from Persian in order to make this important religious text more accessible to the general population (Clayer 1994: 105). In a related issue, among the many things to which historians have pointed as being the Bektashis' biggest contribution to the Albanian national cause was an attempt to standardize the local language to popularize their religious ceremonies.

However positively these acts can be interpreted in a post-Ottoman context, it should be recalled that this self-identified Bektashi community was also part of an evolving social dynamic in which constituencies and collective identity were being renegotiated, not reaffirmed. Naim Frashëri, for one, clearly hoped to popularize Bektashism through his poetry. As already suggested, his poetry is dominated by a tone of differentiation, especially in relation to orthodox Sunni Muslims who made up a majority of *Gegë*. Some interpret this shift as a clear indicator of Bektashism's modernity and its strong European roots, a claim that may be true only in the sense that struggles of difference were also evident in so-called Western politics (Clayer 2006: 488–490).[43] Indeed, in Naim

Frashëri's 1896 manual on the Bektashi order, along with the more basic descriptions of the creed, he emphasized the role of his sect in promoting "progress" and its embrace of civilization (N. Frashëri 1896).[44]

Put into the context of other writings by prominent Bektashi as well as Sami's utterances throughout this period, this emphasis on their "civilized" foundations and their role in promoting (spreading) "progress" to the rest of the Balkans clearly asserts a self-perceived hierarchy that ultimately poisoned Ottoman society. Seeing themselves as the natural cultural leaders of an *Arnavut* political entity, the paternalistic attitude displayed by Tosk Bektashi leaders is evident in the following chant composed to honor the dead spiritual guide Baba Alush, lionized by Bektashis and Orthodox Christian *Toskë* alike:

Kush do Shqipërine, kush?	Who Loves Albania, who?
I miri Baba Alush.	The Good Baba Alush
Nukë vdiq në qiell rron.	He has not died but Lives in the Sky
Dhe së larti na vështron	From Above he Watches over us
Na vështron dhe na thërret.	He Watches us and Calls us to:
'Përpiqi për mëmëdhet.	"Struggle for the motherland
Cili ështe bektashi	The one who is Bektashi
Të punoj'për Shqipëri	Should work for Albania
Të këndoj gjuhën e tija	should speak in his language
Të heq' dorë nga Mavija!'	and denounce Muʿawiya!" (Pepo 1962: 120)

Similarly, a few sections from Naim Frashëri's epic *Kerbela*, wrongly interpreted as an appeal to Albanian patriotism, actually evokes a sectarian conviction that is less than accommodating to Sunni *Gegë*, who are non-Shiʿa and thus linked to the persecution of ʿAli's two sons, and by default, Bektashi:

Zot i math! Per Qerbelanë!	Great God, for Kerbela!
Per Hysejn e per Hasanë!	For Hussayn and for Hasan
Për ata të dymbëdhjetë!	For the sake of the twelve [Imams]
Qe hoqn'aqë keq në jetë!	Who suffered terribly in life
Për gjithë ato mundime!	For all that suffering
Për gashërimënë t'ime!	For my preparedness
Shqipërinë mos e lerë,	Do not allow Albania
Të prishetë e te bjerë	to disappear and perish (N. Frashëri 1978: 4: 288)

These references to Shi'i symbolism composed by local poets during the 1880–1912 period speak both of the persecution suffered by the Bektashi leadership under Ottoman and Greek governments and provide the basis of a unique spiritual idiom that linked the experience of Shi'a to a particular community in *Toskëri*.[45] These widely sung poems are remarkably divisive when closely inspected. Not only do they proclaim that the Bektashi are more intimately associated with "Albania," but they also consider as enemies those who fail to denounce the seventh-century Arab caliph Mu'awiya (whose son, Yazid, murdered the Prophet's grandson Hussayn at Kerbela in 680 C.E. to terminate the 'Ali line that has since separated Sunni from Shi'a). By implication, all Sunni Muslims, among whom most *Gegë* could be labeled, were thus symbolically segregated from the Albanian nation.

In the early years of open armed resistance to the corrupt, and profoundly Sunni, Hamidian state, the Bektashi seemed to promote a sectarian schism throughout the Yanya and Manastir provinces. This resulted in consolidating a common regional experience and hence a consciousness that could not be shared by others outside the spiritual space created in the *tekke*. Bektashi agitators thus organized local armed groups (*çeta*) that would serve as virtual self-protection committees that often attacked villages or rival groups for profit. These *çeta* never included non-*Toskë* and, it appears, did not integrate the few Sunnis in their extended Tosk communities.

This is clear from testimonials of one Selim Pojani who operated within a Manastir-based *çeta* that included members known in Albanian historiography as patriots—Jorgji Qiriazi, Bajo Topulli, and Halit Bërzezhda. In a similar fashion, the Bektashi Baba Hysejn (Hussayn), as the equivalent of a local priest, joined the *çeta* of Çerçiz Topulli, which provided critical support for fellow Tosk Ahmed Niyazi Bey as he successfully secured control of the local Resne garrison that led to a small military victory in the overturn of the Sunni Hamidian regime in 1908 (Pepo 1962: 155–157).

It was a result of this drawn-out process of new forms of interaction that compelled many people to opt out of the larger social network shaped by the presence of the Ottoman state. To them, their world dramatically changed with the advent of new international forces in the larger eastern Mediterranean world, including the arrival of direct British rule in Cyprus and Egypt as well as surrogate states for Russia in Montenegro and Serbia. In this context, large numbers of western Balkan natives, including a disproportionate number of *Rum* Orthodox and Bektashi *Toskë*, sought their fortunes in

the larger world. Next, we chart the journey some of these western Balkan natives take, in Egypt more generally and in particular the native of Vlora, Ismail Kemal Bey (Qemali), to offer yet another angle to appreciating the multiple trajectories of the modern Balkans.

Activism from Abroad

As we have seen, reactions to the 1878 Berlin debacle incited a new wave of anti-Ottoman activism.[46] Among the more aggressive opponents of the sultan's regime was Thimi Mitko. In response to the dramatic loss of territory, which, in turn, brought a flood of new immigrants into Egypt, this affluent merchant based in Beni-Souf compiled patriotic folk songs and proverbs—written both in the Greek and Tosk languages, in an early, experimental non-Arabic script—to inspire pride among his Greek and Albanian-speaking compatriots in Egypt.[47] Other Orthodox Christian *Toskë*, including Thimi Krei, Spiro Dine, Thimi Brandi, Anton Çajupi, and Loni (Toni) Logori, also became activists in one way or another during their stay in Egypt.[48] Anton Çako/Zako/Çajupi (1866–1930) was an activist who is particularly noteworthy for his patriotic poetry, written in Cairo in 1902 under the pen name Baba Tomorri. His work, which quickly circulated throughout the Tosk regions of the Balkans, served as the foundation for a new generation of nationalist-minded poets inspired by other political factors (Mann 1955: 48–50).

The fact that by 1882, the British had started to draw Egypt out of the Ottoman Empire's grasp certainly explains some of this activism. It has yet to be established that direct British administrative encouragement helped these Tosk-led anti-Hamidian campaigns financially or otherwise. What is certain is the larger context in which Mitko, Çako, and others wrote. The British had begun to cultivate a number of groups whose overall function was to challenge Ottoman claims to the Caliphate, among other things. The rise of "nationalist" movements under the protection of Lord Cromer's administration is also not a coincidence, considering Arab, Turkish, Kurdish, Armenian, Bulgarian, and Tosk activists would soon play an important role in the rise of small-scale insurgencies throughout the Ottoman Empire (Hanioğlu 2001: 62–72).

Observing this explosion of productivity most likely instigated by their British rivals, the Austrians, eager to strengthen their links in the Balkans and to educate students there, commissioned the writing of a patriotic history of *Arnavutlar/Shqiptarë* by a Catholic originally from Shkodër, living in Cairo. Written under the pen name Stefan Zurani,

this openly nationalistic textbook highlights the interlinking dynamics behind educational reform in *Gegalık/Gegëni*. That the Austrian consulate in Egypt solicited the aid of Egyptian-based *Arnavutlar/Shqiptarë* is suggestive of both the hopeful thinking on the part of an ambitious consul and strategy to organize segments of the diaspora that could contribute to consolidating Austrian influence in the Balkans.[49]

There is good reason for Austria's line of thinking here. A number of connections with Istanbul's *Arnavutlar/Shqiptarë*, as already noted, suggest that a more profound effort to organize the diaspora into a functioning political force was underway in a number of circles. In 1882, for instance, Jani Vruto helped to establish a branch office of Sami Frashëri's "Association for Writing in Albanian" in Alexandria with some Sicilian money.[50] In 1894, an association calling itself *Vëllazëria e Shqipëtarëve,* or the Albanian Brotherhood, was established with Milo Duçi as president.[51] In the medium term, neither association appeared to do well in Egypt because of infighting over strategy.[52] The role of outsiders to confuse and often compromise these early actions seems especially important in the overall dynamic explored so far. In this regard, the activism of Ismail Qemali proves invaluable to contextualizing this competitive energy linking Greece, Britain, Russia, and Austria in Egypt.

Ismail Qemali Bey

Studying Ismail Qemali Bey (1844–1919) in the larger context of the empire's apparent fragmentation helps us to appreciate how simplistic notions of perpetual ethnic rivalry found in the scholarship can be misleading. Ever since the kingdom of Greece was created in 1830, much of *Toskalık/Toskëri* thrived. Economically, the region's "borderland" status offered many of its merchants assorted opportunities to capitalize on the illicit trade passing through their villages as well as the new kind of political leverage that they gained by straddling a strategically important territory (Gavrilis 2010; Green 2005). Indeed, the political and economic advantages of being so closely integrated into regional affairs that by the 1850s included the delineation and administration of Greek/Ottoman frontier zones meant that those capable of exploiting new opportunities could attract considerable individual power. For Qemali's part, a prominent Ottoman official whose family had longstanding fame in and around the Adriatic port town of Vlora/Avlonya, he was able to use his numerous commercial and political alliances in Epirus to ascend the ranks of power. In many ways, by 1903 he became Epirus' most powerful politician as both members of various

opposition groups and the sultan's palace solicited his support.[53] In this regard, Qemali's case amply demonstrates the need to understand that individual political or economic fortunes did not take shape through a matrix divided along sectarian or so-called ethnic lines alone.

Qemali's influence rested on his links to others in the region, an attribute drawn from his ability to conduct the affairs of many constituencies across any cultural barrier that might emerge. For this reason he was a highly sought-after ally by the opposition to the sultan in the late 1890s; aside from strong contacts with British agents, by 1904 he became a prominent leader of the opposition Committee of Union and Progress (CUP).[54] In this capacity he actively lobbied governments throughout the Mediterranean to help press the sultan into making reforms. As he fraternized with western European officials, Qemali also lived a dual existence as the main advocate for uniting *Toskalık/Toskëri* with Greece, a role no one today considers, seeing that Qemali became Albania's first president in 1913.[55]

An example of how he operated in this context can help. As a prominent itinerant Ottoman dissident cum politician, Qemali intervened in local politics on one of his frequent trips to Cairo in 1901 in the hope of reviving the previously mentioned *Vëllazëria* or brotherhood. Qemali appointed a new president, Gaqi Adhamidhi from Korçë, to oversee the Brotherhood.[56] Not surprisingly, Adhamidhi's primary agenda mirrored that of Qemali, which at the time involved forging a political union between their home region and Greece.[57] Much like his famous mentor, Adhamidhi's frequent visits to Greece, coupled with the active support he received from the Greek Foreign Ministry and the Greek consul in Cairo, underscores the fact that many *Toskë* were far from certain about how to navigate the changes taking place in the Balkans at the time. While Adhamidhi and at times Qemali saw a future union with Greece as the best solution for *Toskëri*, such equivocation did not mean that either man abandoned his more narrow Tosk affiliation. Indeed, Adhamidhi lobbied for and eventually persuaded the Greek government to build a *Toskërisht* language school on Corfu as the first step to integrating and protecting *Toskë* in Greece.[58] The reasoning underlying this was that *Toskë* and Greeks would live in harmony either in a union of some sort or as good neighbors.[59]

Perhaps the most interesting issue from the 1878–1912 period concerning Qemali was his strong support for Athens's attempt to develop local support for the eventual annexation of the entire northern area composed of Tosk Orthodox Christians. Today known as the Epirus question, many in Athens, fearing the extension of Slavic influence in Macedonia after 1905, openly sought to unite with *Toskë*.

The key to the first stage of this policy was to inflame political and economic tensions between the Tosk natives and Ottoman authorities. As we will see later with education in the Yanya and Manastir provinces, Greece had an active agenda to encourage both Muslim and *Rum* Orthodox *Toskë* to imagine stronger cultural and political, let alone economic, ties with Greece.[60]

The origins of this strategy go back to the period immediately after Russia's victory in 1877–1878. By 1883, the government in Athens established a committee on the island of Corfu where a pro-Greek British citizen, G. W. Leybourne, gathered together *Toskë* to form the *Comitato Centrale dell'Alta Albania*. The group's central goal was to figure out how to disrupt Ottoman rule in the Balkans by mobilizing *Toskë*.[61] Those calling for a Greco-Arnavut union under a common monarch were not exclusively *Toskë*. The French consul in Shkodër, for instance, reported that second-tier personalities such as the Catholic Prenk Gjok Curri from Mirdita and Muslim Hajredin Bey from Mati, both exiles in Greece at the time, were also trying to sell Leybourne's committee and its agenda to the world.[62] The problem is that few were buying.

Prominent Italian-Albanian intellectuals such as De Rada openly questioned the motivations of countries that were advising *Toskë* to forge a common union with Greece. Seeing a snake lurking in these overtures, De Rada complained that *Toskë* were far too divided to realistically benefit from a revolt in the Balkans, a conflagration that would benefit only the Greeks, who were likely to sit on the sidelines once the fighting started.[63]

Despite skepticism from key *Toskë*, Athens nevertheless continued to pursue a useful alliance by evoking the theme of a common southern Balkan heritage. A society called *Hoi Vlamides Alvanoi* (the Albanian Blood Brothers) led by Colonel Dimitrios Botsaris pitched the theme that Greece and *Toskëri* had a shared past. Interestingly, one of its primary activities was the suppression of the Latin alphabet that was beginning to circulate in Tosk areas. In time, the movement fused with an "Albanian Union" established in Athens and began to solicit Tosk support openly from within Ottoman territories using a newspaper, *Aster-Yll* (Star), whose editorials called for a mutually acceptable alliance. Written in *Toskërisht* (using Greek letters), the message circulating was a common one among many intellectual *Toskë* who traveled back and forth from Greece into Ottoman lands (Skendi 1967: 305–308).

The underlying message that "Albania" could not be politically independent and that the long, shared history between Greece and *Toskëi* needed to be reasserted by political union did not, of course,

resonate with everyone (Skendi 1967: 308–310). In face of the competition between Italy, Austria, and Greece over local sympathies, this glaring pro-Hellenistic rhetoric, offered in patronizing terms, often with the supplement that protection would be provided by Greek leadership, did not sit well among Ottoman *Toskë* who clearly operated in a world that still was offering them far too many options.[64] In the context of still a formidable Ottoman state and plenty of opportunities for support from Italy and Austria, Qemali's activities prove especially interesting for their persistence.[65]

Since 1892 Qemali publicly advocated a sort of Balkan union in which all the territories in the Balkans would conjoin with the Ottoman Empire to ensure a viable, vibrant, and potentially very powerful state.[66] This federation plan presented to the sultan in 1892 had attracted the interest of Greek officials who believed that, as he became increasingly involved in underground opposition movements, Qemali could serve as the necessary intermediary for their own, hitherto-failed campaign.[67] While Athens had no interest in being subordinate to Istanbul in Qemali's "Great Eastern State" scheme, once Qemali Bey was formally pushed into opposition, his feelings toward something closer to a *Toskë*/Greek alliance was clear.[68]

While opposition movements such as the CUP are understood as part of a larger narrative of nationalist resistance, a closer look at the operations of Qemali and other key members of the leadership of the CUP highlight the play of contradictory motivations. As it has been revealed in the tireless work of Şükrü Hanioğlu, the anti-Hamidian movement was highly fragmented, with conflicting agendas and strategies that ultimately created large schisms in the opposition. Ironically, in light of his overtures to Greece, as a long-time activist who became the chairman of one of the factions in the CUP, Qemali was given the task of consolidating and, if possible, unifying the fragmented opposition (Hanioğlu 2001: 52–55).

Infused with liberal idealism and armed with a set of demands that circulated in the elitist halls of European progressive culture at the time, members of the Ottoman opposition frequently operated under quickly shifting sets of principles. Nevertheless, Qemali unambiguously posed publicly as an Ottoman loyalist for much of his active life. A patriot to the Ottoman identity that formulated his party's ideological foundation, he worked to bridge the ideological gaps that separated factions in the opposition from their rivals. In light of Qemali's relationship to protonationalist groups, his political ambitions are therefore more complex than simply gearing up to be "the father of the Albanian nation" in late 1912.[69]

We see that, despite being at one point chairman of the CUP, Qemali actively lobbied European powers, which, according to the calculations of respective states, could result in frustrating the CUP central committee. Importantly, at no time did Qemali seem to advocate drawing links to these European powers on behalf of "Albania." He always made his overtures to neighboring governments and European powers with the idea of forging a stronger Ottoman society or post-Ottoman society that joined Greece.

In time, Qemali's own understanding of the world would inevitably change. For example, we can see through the opposition's *Osmanlı* newspaper that Qemali's sentiments shifted from France to Britain. Upon championing the British, he identified the positive input that British civilization could bring to the development of Ottoman society as a whole, while seeing only superficial political and cultural contributions that France could make.[70]

It is interesting that, in regard to his ambiguous connection with future Albanian nationalists, this theme of European civilization, in contrast to the retrograde conditions in the Ottoman world, became a central rhetorical tool. Qemali and other *Toskë* were especially enthusiastic advocates of "European civilization." The associations of civilization and backwardness extended to the kind of advocacy that members of the Tosk diaspora would pursue over the years in the context of shaping the contours of Albanian culture and standardizing the Albanian language (Blumi 2011: 106–37). As with the *Tanzimat* generation, the perception that Tosk men of culture frowned upon the cultural backwardness of their Geg cousins is manifest in their publications and private papers.

This interpretation lends new meaning to much of the activities of Qemali and fellow members of the Ottoman-*Arnavut* intellectual elite, both those in exile and those residing in the empire. While Qemali may have shared with his fellow elite *Toskë* their disdain for the uncivilized elements of his homeland and their distrust of the Abdülhamid regime, little else bound them together. Whether for strategic or intellectual reasons, and despite his larger-than-life persona attributed to him by post–World War II historians, with the exception of Egypt, Qemali was isolated among the many disparate Tosk diaspora communities around the Mediterranean.

In this respect, Qemali's activities on behalf of the CUP actively sought the assistance of armed Macedonian, Armenian, and Serb groups. In fact, he lobbied movements that attacked Muslim Geg and Tosk communities in Manastir. This should influence the way in which we ultimately read the reported collaboration between Geg/

Tosk and Bulgarian revolutionaries at the time. Rather than nationalist aspirations, what was really at play between 1902 and 1905 was the vain attempt by the CUP led by Qemali to become relevant amid the growing violence in the Balkans.[71]

As the fear grew among CUP leaders that they were losing influence because of the growing rebellion in Manastir and Salonika, so too did they interpret the growing influence of Austria-Hungary and Italy as a threat. Their rhetorical use of the fear of partition (the charge that the Ottoman state had agreed with Italy and Austria-Hungary to partition *Arnavutluk*) suggests that there may have been a growing link between a new form of interterritorial consciousness and a conceptual position identified in Albanian-centric terms.[72] In other words, in face of possible challenges posed by growing Italian and Austrian influence in the Balkans, men such as Qemali and Ibrahim Temo may have tried to forge stronger ties with all the Albanian-populated areas if for no other reason than to submerge the development of a population over whom the CUP had no control.[73] Unfortunately for the CUP, with the exception of Avlonyalı Cemil, efforts to mobilize a rebellion largely failed as a result of factionalism.[74] Even in Avlonyalı Cemil's case, after only a short period in which some military action was taken in *Toskëri*, Cemil's men were forced to flee abroad, leaving behind a largely disorganized cluster of locals who quickly faded away.[75] In other words, the men who were subsequently identified as nationalists proved at earlier stages of their careers to be either quite ambivalent or opposed to political mobilization in areas outside their immediate control.

CONCLUSION

In looking more critically at what is usually treated as "Albanian" resistance to Slav and Greek expansionism and Ottoman occupation, the interactions between those assumed to be early patriots actually involved a far more complicated set of issues. For Abdyl, an insincere effort at channeling Geg shock and anger to gain leverage over Istanbul proved counterproductive. For his part, Sami seemed to have gained little traction with calls for greater unity around Islam among many of his "own." As for his brother Naim's Bektashism, despite its role in Albanian historiography as the generative force of national consciousness, it proved to have been part of an undercurrent of group chauvinism that must have contributed to the intensification of regionalism dividing Sunni and Catholic *Gegë* from *Rum* Christian and Bektashi

Toskë. Such a chasm, frequently reinforced in Bektashi literature, may also have contributed to a fragmented and ultimately unsuccessful effort by a few to defend the homeland from foreign armies in 1912.

For our current purposes, we need to read the transactions between the Ottoman state and multiple local actors as informed concerns of varied interests that predate nationalism. In so doing, we can reinterpret events that involved a broad range of often conflicting interests without trying to fit the nationalist teleology. Throughout this chapter I asked whether men such as Pashko Vasa and Sami Frashëri actually expressed an early demand for the creation of a "Greater Albania" that would exist independently of the Ottoman Empire. As we see, even after the events of 1878, 1908, and 1912, many putative Albanians still advocated maintaining strong links to the Ottoman Empire. For them, there was no contradiction in self-identifying as Kelmendi, Albanian, Catholic as well as a subject of the sultan. In fact, many of these late Ottoman cultural giants wrote to their fellow Ottomans and advocated the consolidation of community in the hope that this homeland would serve as a barrier to the encroaching menace of sectarianism, ethnonationalism, and xenophobia. Of course, everyone did not share that sentiment.

In the next chapter, I apply a similar revisionist challenge to nationalist paradigms by analyzing an even more complicated set of events that directly related to the Berlin Congress. As already seen above, local reactions to the Treaties of San Stefano and Berlin were quick but varied. Competing interests often contradicted these responses, interests that did not always serve the needs of those immediately affected by the changing world. While the League of Prizren and other local reactions have been interpreted since the 1920s as an essentially nationalist response—a spark that ignited the "Albanian awakening"—Pashko Vasa's prose, for example, highlights that there are alternative ways of reading these events that help us avoid assuming that nationalism was the sole motivation behind individual and group actions. For many, the act of drawing new frontiers that divided their homeland may have stirred the collective passions of communities whose very identities today are linked to a new border, not a larger "nation." While men such as Abdyl would like to blame these communities for not following his lead, there are clearly other factors at play beyond their "ignorance," and lack of "civilization."

4

Exchange and Governance: Boundaries and the Struggle to Define/Confine People

One of the most traumatic consequences of the 1877–1878 crisis was the imposition of "boundaries" meant to formalize a new world order managed by Europe's ascendant powers. The problem for the inhabitants of these newly delimited lands was that this subsequent "borderland" experience created a number of social, economic, and political reactions and counterreactions that ultimately undermined the "modern" geographies imagined by the Great Powers. In a word, modern European borders could not yet define by separation the inhabitants of these lands. Rather, the imposition of borders transformed peoples' relationship with states that had introduced new administrations to manage these now-strategic territories. Crucially, the nature of the subsequent "friction" proved far less amenable to modern state coercive power than initially hoped. As a result, local conditions often demanded measures of cooperation and negotiation—that is to say: *politics*—that most post-Ottoman studies fixed on the image of primordial ethnic and sectarian divides fail to acknowledge. Borders, in other words, created new possibilities for complex forms of politics rather than "modern" government power that was hegemonic.

As demonstrated throughout, the exercise of exchange and mutually beneficial governance was the principal social, economic, and political dynamic at play in the western Balkans. The new borderlands imposed by the Great Powers only expanded the conditions in which this fundamental aspect of modern life persisted. That said, the borders did introduce a twist to this equation. Much like the politically alluvial east Mediterranean setting highlighted in previous chapters, the borders created another context in which people long assumed to be the mere victims of "history" continued to shape the direction of the modernization

transitional process. In other words, the way modern states governed these borderlands often was shaped by the inhabitants borders were meant to confine, define, and permanently change (Zartman 2010).

I use this chapter to highlight how local agency—trade, politics, social and cultural exchange—destabilizes the modern border. In place of the assumed geographic order the 1878 diplomatically drawn boundaries offered the region, peoples living within these "borderlands" experienced parallel trajectories of modernity introduced throughout this book. In this regard, beyond laying out a detailed study of the new frontier administrations the new states of Montenegro and Serbia had to impose on their frontiers, I introduce two cases of local mobilization that ultimately challenged these new borderland regimes. In both cases—*Malësorë* collectively and Isa Boletini individually—it will be the contradictory demands of governance in reaction to local contingency that opens up avenues of action and hence permit our rereading of modernity at large.

That these ascendant locals emerged in a confused post-Berlin regime only partially tells the story of these borderlands, however. Their activism did force state administrations to adapt to new conditions on the ground, but as a result, the adjustments that state bureaucracies made created even more channels of engagement for local stakeholders. The consequences were a growing list of potential constituents, clients, and rivals of prominent locals such as Isa Boletini, various *Malësorë,* and all the competing states. Here then is yet one more opportunity to explore the complexity of the modern world through largely ignored indigenous channels that are informed by the very Ottoman context in which they emerge. In a word, we are not simply dealing with nation-states and national heroes defined by boundaries. Modernity in the western Balkans remained a local experience that was then translated in other forms once filtered through the emerging state bureaucracies of the era. There can be, in other words, no separating what post-Berlin regimes tried to impose on the borderlands of the modern world and the interactive dynamics that took place between local interested parties and the Ottoman state.

A Modern World Repeatedly Refined

As already seen, the apparent imposition of modern power in the western Balkans by late 1877 shattered the ability of Young Ottoman reformers, including their local allies, to engage state subjects that they had a decade earlier hoped to administer within a single province. In lieu of continuing the quest for rationalizing state authority

in the western Balkans with the creation of *Arnavutluk* and a larger Ottoman identity, the Ottoman state suffered the indignity of territorial loss as a result of defaulting on loans to Europe's banking families and the subsequent promotion of Russian and Austria-Hungarian ascendancy in the region. A direct consequence of this transition was a reterritorialization process that created new factions among the social and economic elite that surfaced after the violence of the 1870s. These factions increasingly diverged on how best to govern what was left of the region. Since the greatest fear of many reformers and their local allies had been realized with a new ethnic and sectarian-based order imposed by the outside world, many distrusted the renewed calls for the creation of a greater *Arnavutluk*. The exaggerated fears of separatism lurking behind such *Tanzimat*-era policy suggestions led to state hostility toward those advocates not fully vetted as Ottoman loyalists. In response to this paranoia, local confidence in the Ottoman state and the ability of its new generation of loyalists diminished. In a process that parallels what was happening in the Middle East (Makdisi 2000), new social and political forces emerged out of the sudden changes in relations with the state and thus transformed the Balkans forever.

The nature of that change was not, however, predicated on absolute cultural segmentation. The fact that these lands would remain culturally "mixed" thus posed a problem for some early nationalist state-builders in Serbia and Montenegro. The fact that polyglot Catholics, Muslims, and Christians tied to various orthodox churches still lived together presented a contradiction to exclusivist claims made by the ambitious liberals finding new power in the region. In an attempt to address this incongruent social reality, state bureaucracies in Montenegro and Serbia became the new political battleground as conflicting visions of the post-*Tanzimat* order clashed. On one side, politically ambitious liberals aimed to instigate new social rules to their uncomfortably heterogeneous societies. The subsequent struggle to secure these "rescued" homelands in face of resistance by those suddenly deemed "minorities" created several mutually exclusive narratives of modern statehood that mirrored the emerging factions within the new states' bureaucracies (Todorova 1997: 109; Wolff 1996: 144–194). Many within these governments (and out) capitalized on the apparent contradiction to create new narratives of fear, plans of colonization, and alliances with newly empowered religious institutions. In this context, the new border areas themselves became the domain in which questions of belonging, especially within state-sanctioned religious orders, surfaced in their most raw and violent form.[1]

On the other hand, there were elements within all these regimes that frowned upon such politics of "difference" on display. Fiscal conservatives in particular, in face of demands from Europe's financial elite to start again repaying the Ottoman's debt their new countries inherited, feared the likely economic disruptions caused by any rise in ethnosectarian chauvinism. In their attempt to preempt any outbreak of violence, factions within each government promoted a flexible, accommodating regime in the economically productive lands that made up the new borders separating, for example, Serbia and Kosova (the former Niš *sancak*), and the Adriatic from its hinterland (Işkodra *vilâyet*).

The ensuing struggle to shape government policies thus pitted some bureaucrats against local interests, a constant in western Balkan history that would not change until the 1920s. Aspects of this fluid interaction of agents of history may be usefully observed with a brief description of how the fractious governments of Serbia and Montenegro managed the new territories awarded to them by first the San Stefano and then Berlin treaties.

The Kingdom of Serbia's Expansion into Niš

The previously autonomous regional government of Serbia's move into the Niš province during the Russo-Ottoman war of 1877 is especially useful for the points made throughout as the experience contrasts only in degree from the much more contentious and precarious Montenegrin case discussed later. While Serbia's makeshift bureaucracy would invest far more human capital into quickly absorbing the Niš province and its numerous multiethnic districts, the process was not clear-cut (Svirčević 2007). For one, the initial steps taken by the Belgrade regime under Prince Obrenović reflected a divided political class in Serbia. There was from day one, for example, a conflict between those advocating an expedient chauvinism on one side and an economic realism on the other. For those who saw the disruptive long-term consequences of permanently expelling "non-Serbs" from the newly awarded territories, which by most accounts was a majority non-Serb population prior to 1877–1878,[2] the biggest concern was the region's economic base. Simply put, placating Belgrade-based nationalists did not fit well with the demands Serbia's newfound independence made on the economy.

Recall that both Serbia and Montenegro inherited some of the outstanding debt from the Ottoman Empire and were thus expected to adopt strategies to pay back this debt, which in many ways read like conditions imposed on "debtor" states today by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). For one, Serbia and Montenegro had to

expose their economies to European private capital as well as float new loans while establishing a national economy geared to paying back its debt. In this setting, Serbia's hard-line "ethnic" entrepreneurs were somewhat restrained throughout the 1880s as bureaucrats insisted that the country needed to maintain a balance between demands for demographic purification and the need to preserve the economic vitality of the Niš province and its many tax-paying districts (Pirot, Leskovac, Prokuplje, Vranje, and Toplica).[3]

This all suggests that considerable energy was invested in adapting to the very different and diverse local conditions that had evolved over the course of the Tanzimat. At the forefront of this accommodating side of the new Serbian regime was the attempt to return this highly productive area to some form of economic stability. In this regard, officials prioritized economic stability in the region, long dependent on agriculture and regional markets found in what was after 1878 in Ottoman Kosova. As as a consequence, Belgrade would have to adopt policies that encouraged continuity and reintegration, not destruction.

The most readily available example of this balancing the domestic political needs of radical nationalists with larger economic demands is the management of the so-called *Novi Krajevi* (new areas) of Niš recently transferred to Serbia. In these areas, the Serbian regime actually attempted to protect the "minority" landowning class whose Muslim faith presumably disqualified them from living in the new principality. Rather than simply confiscating the land, as promoted by some, more pragmatic elements of the state bureaucracy developed mechanisms that advocated greater stability. For example, almost immediately after securing the regions around Niš and through the Morava and Nišava river valleys in July 1877, experienced bureaucrats from Belgrade were sent to the region with considerable administrative power. Among other things, this cadre of administrators, under the direct command of Alimpije Vasiljević, the Minister of Education and Religious Affairs, successfully transferred governmental responsibilities in these areas from the army to civilians (Guzina 1976: 237; Stojičić 1980: 41).

In the process of first establishing a civilian-run provisional government and then adopting policies that formally integrated these southern territories into a larger Serbia in less destructive ways, an elaborate scheme developed around the principle of local–Belgrade collaboration. This proved somewhat inconsistent because of the diverse conditions facing officials sent by Belgrade. After all, these were formerly Ottoman territories with a vastly more diverse population that, no matter how effective Serb army's "ethnic cleansing" schemes were, was not fully eradicated.[4] Therefore, instead of seeking to "complete" the task

of "purifying" Niš, it is clear that in many cases, considerable effort was put to not only keep "non-Serbs" from leaving but also encourage large numbers now living as refugees in Kosova to return.

One of the measures adopted to realize this goal was consulting with locals in drawing up plans to attract people to return. Such a strategy corresponds with evidence that Vasiljević's civilian government strategically granted "non-Serbs" important roles within the municipal councils set up in these early years of integration. Such local participation greatly tempered the push by Serbs from the north whose attitude toward these "backwater" districts resembled more a colonialist than a "Serb brother." In these border regions, as a consequence, far less economic exploitation took place. This distinction between more "integrated" districts and those remaining distant proves crucial to understanding the post–Berlin Congress Balkans in general.

In those municipalities and districts where locals retained the desired counterweight to Belgrade-based nationalist and army officials, considerable continuity from the Ottoman era to the Serbian is evident. According to Vasiljević in a report to Belgrade, his administration preserved many of the Ottoman institutions, and, as much as possible, encouraged those who previously ran them to stay. He justified this by assuring his superiors in Belgrade that locals were accustomed to these institutions and would be willing to cooperate with the new regime if not faced with so much day-to-day change affecting their lives. In other words, Vasiljević reveals an underlying tension in the modern world: Serbian state rule would be acceptable, even to Albanians and other Muslims, if these old institutions remained in place (Guzina 1976: 239).

Slobodan Jovanović (1934: 13) seemed to come to this conclusion by observing that in strategically important areas the new Serbian state purposefully left the old Ottoman laws intact. More important, when the state wished to enforce its authority, officials felt it necessary to seek the assistance of those with some experience using the old Ottoman administrative codes to serve as judges. Stojančević (1995: 199–203) also noted that this was taking place in the region of Znepolje that bordered Bulgaria. There still remained, however, the problem of the region being largely depopulated as a consequence of the wars.

Jagodić (2004: 134) tabulated that at least 30,000 "Albanians" had been forced to leave Niš, Prokuplje, Leskovac, and Vranje for Kosova. Belgrade needed these people to return. In subsequent attempts to lure these economically vital people back while paying lip-service to the nationalist calls for "purification," Belgrade officials adopted a compromise position that satisfied both economic rationalists who argued that Serbia needed these people and those who wanted to

separate "Albanians" from "Serbs." Instead of returning people back to their "mixed" villages and towns of the previous Ottoman era, these "Albanians" and "Pomoks" and "Turks" were encouraged to move into concentrated clusters of villages in Masurica, Gornja Jablanica, and along the road to Projkuplje that the Serbian state set up for them (Jagodić 2004: 134). For this "repatriation" to work, however, authorities needed the cooperation of local leaders to help persuade refugees to "return" (Guzina 1976: 239–240).

In this regard, the collaboration between Sahit Pasha and the Serbian regime stands out. An Albanian who commanded the Sofia barracks during the war, Sahit Pasha negotiated directly with the future king of Serbia, Prince Milan Obrenović, to secure the safety of those returnees who would settle in the many villages of Gornja Jablanica (Turović 2002: 87–89). To help facilitate such collaborative ventures, laws were needed that would guarantee the safety of these communities likely to be targeted by the rising nationalist elements infiltrating the Serbian army at the time.

Indeed, throughout the 1880s, efforts were made to regulate the interaction between exiled Muslim landowners and those local and newly immigrant farmers working their lands. Laws in which Muslims were formally protected from outright land confiscation were passed in both 1880 (the Law on Agrarian Trade) and 1882 (Law on Use of Agrarian land by way of loan) (Stojančević 1995: 280–281; Stojičić 1987: 12–14). Furthermore, Milan Spasić (1984: 263–370) revealed that the new laws passed in early 1880 began a process of managing the resettlement of the region that accommodated refugees who came from Austrian-controlled Herzegovina and from Bulgaria.[5] Cooperation, in other words, was the preferred form of exchange within the borderland, not violent confrontation.

The counterintuitive cooperative dynamic observed above between putative "national enemies" corresponds with a larger claim I wish to make in this chapter. As we will see with the Montenegrin case in the next section, state policies are frequently modified in face of changing conditions on the ground. These policy modifications are often dictated by nonstate actors such as Ali Gusi and Lukë Marku, whose cluster of villages in the *Malësi* became part of the Ottoman/Montenegrin border. This important corrective is further elaborated later by studying the case of Isa Boletini whose once obscure village actually sat on the very strategic crossroads of the Serbian/Ottoman frontier discussed above. The following cases, therefore, further demonstrate that locals were able to challenge and ultimately change modern policies meant to establish "order" to a rapidly changing world.

Montenegro and *Malësi*

Kosova/Niš was not the only area in the western Balkans directly affected by the ill-conceived Berlin treaty. Some of the more important regions were those set for transfer from Ottoman sovereignty to Montenegro (Blumi 2003a; Roberts 2007: 237–257). These areas, known by locals as *Malësi e Madhe,* constituted a complex area of valleys, pasturelands, and forests, all of which were governed by an elaborate matrix of local communities that 500 years of Ottoman rule could not supplant. In time, these communities directly impacted by new territorial allotments would organize in self-defense units that many in Kosova during the summer of 1878 had hoped to manipulate as leverage for their own political goals (Skendi 1967: 88). Rather than serving a "greater Albania," however, these groups played the role of communal self-defense groups whose retaliatory raids across newly drawn borders actually forced an outside world initially refusing to acknowledge *Malësorë* to finally engage them as necessary partners.[6]

Why these communities prove worthy of our attention is due to their successful resistance to the enforcement of new borders that left their villages and pastures within a foreign and potentially hostile state. In many ways, it would not be the Great Powers that dictated where new borders were drawn in the *Malësi* but the villagers of these directly affected areas, a resilience that won them security for another 40 years. This resilience proved crucial to adding to a growing literature on the modern border in a way that stresses the value of scaling down the scope of analysis to the village level rather than remaining fixed on the diplomatic side.

This part of the *Malësi* region proved important both to determining the future Montenegrin/Ottoman frontier and to the larger international regime attempting to impose "order" on the region. Not only did the transfer of large areas of these lands fail to ensure a smooth administrative transition, but the process also opened up a number of avenues for political mobilization and community building across what had previously been substantial economic divides. Local communities, refugees, and, counterintuitively, the newly independent state of Montenegro proved over the course of these highly contentious transitional periods to be far less compliant to the ethnosectarian social model than was perhaps assumed when strategies were drawn in 1878.[7] This is, therefore, a story that must cover a number of angles traditionally ignored in nationalist historiographies.

Montenegro's Prince Nikola I Mirkov Petrović-Njegoš (1841–1921) and his government were forced to deal with a number of

dangerous contingencies that emerged during the 1877–1878 period of settling frontiers, similar to those Serbian bureaucrats faced with the Niš district (figure 4.1). Of primary concern was the fact that large numbers of people who would have to be incorporated into his new state did not formally associate with his regime. In many ways, this cross-section of urban *Gegë*, *Malësorë*, Dalmatian, and Slav coexistence served the region well as its inhabitants established economic

Figure 4.1 Montenegro's Prince Nikola I Mirkov Petrović-Njegoš. (Photo courtesy: George Grantham Bain Collection, Prints & Photographs Division, Library of Congress, LC-USZ62–61094.)

connections extending far into the Adriatic hinterland. The violence in the 1870s and the Austro-Hungarian occupation of Herzegovina in 1878, however, abruptly transformed these relations (Babuna 1999).

While his traditional constituents represented a complicated mixture of horizontally ruled communities that relied on long-established commercial and political alliances with *Malësorë*, the new Montenegro was inundated with at least two entirely new clusters of Slav-speaking groups that needed immediate political and economic accommodation. The arrival of large numbers of Slav refugees from Herzegovina and Dalmatia, in other words, dramatically changed Prince Nikola's political calculations, transforming in the process his future relations with the *Malësorë*.

The most important element forcing the hand of the young state was accommodating the fringe Vasojević and Pivljani, Drobnjaci, and Lukovo clans filing in from Herzegovina. The domestic clan alliances (*bratstvo/fis*) such as the Riječka Nahia (within which scholars have identified sub-*bratstvo* or "tribes" [*plemena*] such as Kosijeri, Dobrsko Selo, and Ljubotinj), Rovca, Piperi, Tomići, and the Bulatovići, long aligned to Nikola, were forced to accommodate large numbers of these new arrivals.[8] For many tense years that followed, Nikola and his new, well-armed Herzegovinian subjects interacted in a dynamic and entirely new political economy of government reform that transformed the Montenegrin state's relation with the rest of the population.[9]

As in Kosova during the 1875–1912 period, at the heart of the problem for Nikola's regime was economically accommodating this large number of refugees, many of whom settled in Upper Morača. These refugees' movements constituted literal "invasions" that would disrupt the socioeconomic life of *Malësorë* throughout the region.[10] In place of the traditional pattern of coexistence, however, Nikola's accommodations led to profiteering from land raids, theft of livestock, and general violence often encouraged by the Russian officials who were bankrolling the new state and orthodox priests.

Additional pressure to economically subjugate the region came from the international financial elite. In their quest to command absolute control over the economic resources of the region, the banking interests influencing the outcome of the Berlin Congress articulated a role for a Nikola-run principality to play. Nikola, much like the Slavic elite in the newly created Serbia further east, was quickly forced to adopt new policies vis-à-vis his many different constituencies to serve those interests that wanted to maximize the economic surplus extracted from the western Balkan region.

Among the many influences directly affecting Montenegro's early policies was the fact that it inherited part of the Ottoman debt, on which the Ottomans had defaulted several years earlier (Miller 1966: 391). To pay back this debt, Nikola was expected to borrow aggressively to build up an army and navy (with Russian support), fortify borders, and develop an infrastructure. Part of this capital investment included railways that would connect the coast to lucrative mineral and forest resources in the hinterland and other lines constructed (again by heavy borrowing) in newly independent Serbia, autonomous Romania, Bulgaria, and a humbled Ottoman state (Blumi 2005: 231–255). Put in the larger context of Ottoman bankruptcy (again, perhaps the single most important factor behind the diplomatic moves in larger European circles to break-up Ottoman territories into new states), it becomes clear that Nikola did not have much room for maneuver after gaining independence. Indeed, by the time the new sultan agreed to sign the Muharram Decree of 1881 that would cede much of the Ottoman Empire's ports and roads to a debt commission charged with collecting revenue on behalf of the banks, every component of the new Balkan order—Nikola, the Ottoman administration, Serbia, and local allies—was expected to participate in the management and regulation of transregional trade (Eldem 1970: 260–262).

This was the political economy of late Ottoman Balkan transformation. What is largely lost in this story is the role that locals and the local administrators in all three states played in fulfilling the needs of the day-to-day operation of the region's economy. The evidence described below reveals how many of the *Malësorë* and their neighbors who found themselves at the center of an international crisis would adopt new roles that empowered them to negotiate, on their own terms, political patronage and, for many, an economic windfall. This meant that the entire region changed. To understand the significance of this change outside the nationalist tropes of the post-Ottoman world, we need to account fully for how individual communities interwove their variable interests with those of states that were often incapable of enforcing the demands of the larger powers and their financial masters.

THE *MALËSORË*

The Gusi (Gosine in Ottoman, Gusinje in southwest Slavic), Plava, and further to the west, Hoti and Gruda regions proved particularly crucial to this process. In the case of Gusi, a local named Ali rapidly mobilized thousands of men and demanded that his homeland, formally incorporated into Montenegro by the cartographers of the Berlin

Congress, be returned to the Ottoman Empire.[11] Although the Berlin Treaty demanded that the Ottoman state help enforce the treaty's territories by force if necessary, the capacity of locals to implement large-scale regional strife undermined any meaningful effort to this end on the part of Istanbul. For want of a military capacity to suppress Ali of Gusi's uprising, and a larger concern for the consequences if resistance in these "disputed" border areas spread, any effort to transfer these lands to Montenegro would have to be made by the newly independent state itself.

Already known for his activities in the summer of 1878 in Kosova, Ali of Gusi, the local patriarch (later anointed with the title of pasha by the sultan for his efforts) raised a force of 8000 local men to confront the army that Prince Nikola had sent to occupy this strategic mountain area. Although the battle was hard fought, Ali's forces eventually pushed back the Montenegrin mercenaries and compelled Nikola to concede that his rough coalition of recent Herzegovinian refugees and various local allies (including some mixed "Albanian" and "Slavic" *bratstvo/fis*) did not have the means to occupy these territories. The defeat revealed to the world that the process of delineating the frontiers of the area had little to do with ethnic or sectarian criteria. For his part, Nikola conceded that he could not physically secure the Gusi/Plava area, and outside powers began to consider other options.

Under Ali's opportunistic leadership, the region's occupants, comprising Muslim and Catholic *Malësorë*, organized to resist. While the battle over Gusi and neighboring Plava secured a place in history for Ali, the actions and long-term consequences of this local resistance to the Berlin Congress may require rethinking before the events are committed to "Albanian" nationalist mythology. While Ali wrote in a personal letter to the sultan stating, "Now that you [the sultan] have abandoned me . . . [and] you come to force me to submit to Montenegro, I will see myself as between two enemies" (Schirò 1904: 60–61), what is often lost when historians study this kind of situation is the range of options available to such men. Ali of Gusi clearly felt that the covenant between the sultan and his subject had been broken. But that did not mean rebellion as much as a new kind of relationship based on mutual dependency.[12]

As a testament to the ever-shifting dynamics of regional politics, in time his defiance opened a number of opportunities for Ali. In return for his ultimately accepting Ottoman state patronage, his promised loyalty and cooperation secured these disputed border areas and their populations. In the end, the Ottoman state placated Ali with land and a position in the local administration because he could mobilize forces at

the right time. Offered the administrative post of *mutasarrif* in October 1881, Ali's place in the region as a key player in the Ottoman's long-term agenda solidified; by pitting himself against the temporary needs of both the Sublime Porte and the larger international community, Ali secured leverage and the state paid handsomely to co-opt his services.[13]

As a consequence of being rewarded for his political entrepreneurship, Ali was compelled to adopt new responsibilities. As he joined forces with the Ottoman state, he was often asked to do the regime's dirty work in the region; not surprisingly, this eventually included the suppression of other *Gegë* in the lowlands of Kosova.[14] According to the accolades and state gifts transferred to his coffers, Ali did not disappoint his Ottoman patrons: His is a track record of personal self-interest that is all but forgotten today by those labeling him an Albanian hero.[15] This proves important to understand what happened immediately after Ali of Gusi successfully fended off Prince Nikola's forces in his home region.

The first solution to the Gusi debacle was particularly indicative of the arbitrary nature of modern diplomacy. In return for allowing all of Gusi and Plava to remain under Ottoman sovereignty, the Italians suggested that the Ottoman Empire instead cede areas northeast of Lake Shkodër, including much of the pasturelands of two other powerful *Malësorë* communities—Hoti and Gruda—to Montenegro.[16] In other words, the military stalemate at the mountain passes leading to Gusi and Plava resulted in a new round of measures to resolve this potentially dangerous situation, and a compromise (again reached without consulting locals) was accepted by all powers on April 18, 1880.[17]

Remarkably, it appears that the Italians, who made the proposal, had failed to learn anything from the Gusi debacle.[18] Local *Malësorë* who exclusively populated the Hoti and Gruda areas were also going to resist demands that they cede their lands to a new Slavic state. Indeed, led by Lukë Marku, Marash Uçi, and Marash Marku, these communities took up defensive positions and threatened armed resistance. Once again, neither the Ottoman Empire nor Montenegro had the capacity to subdue these areas. In a matter of months, both Montenegro and the Ottomans agreed to return to diplomatic wrangling.[19]

From the perspective of most of the Great Powers, the stalemate was a disaster. An order fixed by clear lines of differentiation based on cartographical principles and natural laws was in danger of falling apart all along the newly established borders. Basically, the most powerful and modern states in the civilized world were incapable of imposing boundaries on a group of people who they believed to be so insignificant that they never considered it necessary to consult

them while drawing (and redrawing) the frontiers. These early events marked a new gray area from which a number of ambitious political entrepreneurs—be they leaders of the tens of thousands of refugees from northern provinces, or community patriarchs such as Ali of Gusi, Lukë Marku of Hoti, or Isa Boletini—would emerge.

In response to local resistance, the Great Powers introduced a dangerous series of new measures that would ultimately sanction the use of force to assert Montenegro's shifting territorial claims, as well as ensure Ottoman stability.[20] Of course, the use of force by outside powers would have to be a tool only in places where it was actually possible to have a positive effect. This place would be the coastal town of Ulqin (Dulcigno). In exchange for highland districts in *Malësi* remaining with the Ottomans and their placating locals, the Great Powers awarded Montenegro the port of Ulqin. Not surprisingly, this concession became the source of yet another round of confrontation between those inhabiting the city and the outside world, which included violent clashes with Ottoman forces that were compelled to enforce the "treaty" agreements by the Great Powers.[21]

The consequences of these clashes varied over the next 20 years, especially in respect to the ability of Ottoman officials to balance their influence in the larger region in the face of an ongoing refugee crisis that their own troops would reluctantly help to create.[22] Ostensibly, the parameters of what was local had changed with the influx of an entirely new group of actors. Communities expelled from their homes suffered ethnically motivated violence and religious intolerance, and this new demographic volatility upset the older social order that had preserved the delicate balance between parochial interests and the maintenance of relations between "ethnic" and "sectarian" groups. This constituted a dangerous period of tension and opportunism as old patterns of conflict resolution were thrust aside. Importantly, the most obvious "communities" in danger of retribution did not always suffer the brunt of refugee violence. In other words, the reactions did not evolve into a struggle against other "ethnic" groups but were played out between shifting economic interests and subsequent political opportunities.

For many soon-to-be refugees violently expelled from the areas ceded in 1878 and 1880, the final act in which the authorities negotiated away their homelands fundamentally altered the relationship between the state and the inhabitants of the region. This returns us to the importance of the betrayal many locals felt in face of the new opportunities presented to Prince Nikola as a result of the transformations. Because historians write about this period in exclusively ethnonational terms, we have lost the nuances behind the overtures

the Montenegrin ruler would ultimately make to *Malësorë* specifically and lowland Geg merchants more generally in the quest for solidifying his state's power and legitimacy from 1880 onward.

Building the Montenegro State

In face of resistance to the eventual ceding of port Ulqin to Montenegro, both the Ottoman and the Montenegrin states adopted administrative strategies that further complicated the western Balkans. The single most dynamic force at play was the flow of tens of thousands of refugees from Niš and Herzegovina into both the Ottoman territories and Montenegro. What scholars such as Ağanoğlu ignore was that this multitude of Ottoman Muslims, Catholics, and Orthodox Christian Slavs who had been expelled from their ancestral homes immediately transformed the contours of regional politics and the ability of both states to maintain order in their borderlands (Ağanoğlu 2001: 28–45).

As we have already seen in Chapter 3, the influx of homeless lowland *Gegë* and *Malësorë* into the redrawn provinces of Kosova, Işkodra, and beyond constituted a disruptive force. In a matter of weeks, these dispersed peoples reconstituted themselves into active units that started to apply pressure on local and foreign governments as well as directly challenge indigenous communities for access to vital resources such as government funds, water, farmland, forests, and roads.[23]

The newly constituted Montenegrin state attempted to respond to these dynamics by enforcing over the next 30 years a policy of partial ethnic homogenization. In this regard, Montenegro's policy toward the communities straddling the newly established border became one of selectively expelling non-Slav inhabitants and replacing them with settlers from Herzegovina and Serbia. The selective use of state power had a long-term economic rationale: extract as much wealth from the indigenous population as possible and then expand the range of trade in the region that would give Montenegro a relative advantage over its Ottoman rival in the medium to long term. Such nuanced policies involved financial inducements for the lowland *Gegë* who were deemed essential to keeping the state's economy connected to the outside world. It was, after all, these Geg communities in the coastal towns and highland villages that sustained for centuries interregional trade, links that extended all the way to Malta, Egypt, and the Levant (Bushati 1998). This at the very least reveals the fact that Prince Nikola's state-building policies required a flexible approach to his inherited heterogeneous population instead of simply resorting to wholesale ethnic cleansing.

In the end, Prince Nikola had to treat his Muslim and Catholic subjects cautiously. The *Gegë* who had long dominated trade from the coast to mountain areas newly acquired by Montenegro represented a significant portion of the able-bodied male population of the small state in 1878. These men could either put up a fight or help sustain the new state's economy. In many ways, these non-Slavs held the key to the early Montenegrin state's political stability and economic survival.

As it would have been militarily impossible, as well as economically suicidal, to force embedded populations in the key port of Ulqin or highland communities along key trade routes to migrate en masse, Nikola and his local allies had to adopt a selective policy of integration. As it turned out, noted in the Serbian case earlier, the conditions forced Montenegro to adopt policies that helped its long-term economic survival rather than serve a purely ethnoreligious agenda. Moreover, by keeping enough politically dependent *Gegë* in the country, Nikola actually held some leverage over his new and growing Herzegovina constituency. With the benefit of hindsight, this proved a shrewd move; these "Serbs" from Herzegovina consistently posed a threat to Montenegrin sovereignty throughout the twentieth century.[24]

A closer look at how Nikola carefully managed his *Gegë* thus complicates what has generally been characterized as a simple story of ethnic cleansing. That being said, for those who were targeted for expulsion, the majority of *Gegë* in fact, the Nikola regime developed some rather elaborate policies of sustained harassment. To successfully put pressure on the most nonessential *Gegë* to leave Montenegro without destroying the economic vitality of the country, Nikola's government adopted bureaucratic measures that imposed on Muslims in particular restrictions that offended their religious sensibilities. For example, all Montenegrin subjects were banned from burying deceased members of their community within the first 24 hours, as is required in Islamic law. In a similar fashion, all Muslim businesses had to cater to local Slav consumption needs, such as selling wine and pork in their shops, while remaining open on Fridays and closed on Sundays. A related demand forced all Muslim children to attend a Slav-language school, where presumably they would be taught Christianity. In addition, the state made it illegal for the Muslim community to oppose the marriage between a Muslim woman and an Orthodox Montenegrin. Finally, all Muslims were required to assist in maintaining public toilets.[25]

Not surprisingly, these regulations and their heavy-handed enforcement contributed to the "voluntary" emigration of Muslims by the thousands, an exodus officially condemned by the Ottoman state.[26] Such policies were not, however, fully successful. It was not enough to humiliate people; other measures were also needed.[27]

If all else failed, Montenegrin authorities simply bribed stubborn community leaders to emigrate, using money supplied by Russia. This policy assumed that once a leader left, the rest of his community would follow. In fact, Austro-Hungarian officials in Bosnia had used this tactic in 1878 when expelling large numbers of Herzegovina's Orthodox Christians (Velikonja 2003: 118–123), perhaps providing the Montenegrin government a model of population control. After all, many of Nikola's henchmen had been refugees themselves and may have simply reapplied the tactics used against them by the Austro-Hungarians on Montenegro's non-Slav populations.

There were nuances to this campaign, however. In 1880, for instance, officials in Montenegro's capital Cetinje encouraged the leaders of the Geg Catholic community to move to Ottoman territories in return for paying considerable amounts of money for the property they left behind.[28] This "peaceful approach" to state building would change by 1883 in the areas bordering Kelmendi, Vukli, and Plava after communities there refused to leave even after offers of money. In these regions, the state elected to use violence instead. Nikola was perfecting the art of ethnic cleansing and was willing to use force if necessary.[29]

Despite their forced migration, the commercial links between many of these refugees and Montenegro were not entirely cut. Officials allowed, for example, refugees newly settled in the border town of Tuz to maintain their businesses in Montenegro either by negotiating with the state for one member of the extended family to remain behind or by paying new Slav migrants to manage their affairs.[30] Within a few years, these partnerships turned into a new regional dynamic that ultimately brought the Ottoman and Montenegrin states into some form of cooperative understanding.

In reaction to local pressure, the governments in both Cetinje and Shkodër created a commission through which the affairs of those leaving the Montenegrin territories would be handled in a legal and transparent manner. Indeed, emigrants were able to establish formal ownership of the property in the towns that they were forced to leave. In addition, an office was apparently established in Podgoriza that ensured "fair" compensation for any land that was ultimately issued to others by the Montenegrin state.[31] In the end, both governments clearly wanted to ensure that the careful management and collaboration of locals would reinvigorate a functioning regional economy.

Part of this collaboration is evident in the capital investments the Montenegrin government made to ensure that the commercial links between the disrupted Geg communities extended across borders. While expelling most of the Geg inhabitants from the port town of Antivari/Tivar/Bar and many from Ulqin further south, the

Montenegrin state was at the same time building a road to connect the two port towns and the Ottoman frontier.[32] State authorities envisioned that the road would help facilitate the communication between the core merchant communities that remained in Montenegro and their now-displaced partners living in Ottoman territory.[33]

Nikola's government also made direct overtures to Shkodër families, encouraging them to capitalize on the situation by securing much of the trade that had otherwise been disrupted by the creation of the Montenegrin state. This collaboration between Montenegro and merchant families in Shkodër seems to have initiated a new era of regional trade and further complicated the way in which the peoples of the region understood the world around them. Among the more interesting consequences of this transitional process was the emergence of new zones of trade all along the frontiers. The borders themselves, heavily guarded at traditional transit points, created new economic opportunities for people living on both sides. Among other forms of business, smuggling became a crucial part of the regional economy and the foundation of a new political order (Blumi 2010b).

It is by exploring how trade patterns changed in the interior as well as along the coast that we begin to appreciate the transformative impact of imposing new territorial unity in northern *Gegëni*. To start with, Montenegro invested in the rising flow of smuggled goods by building the road mentioned earlier. As a result of new economies emerging from the smuggling that took place, the process of adjusting to new territorial realities became multilayered. The trade interests of a growing number of stakeholders were pitted against abstract administrative goals, which included taxing trade and changing the local perceptions of what constituted a community's interests.

Over time, the administrator's job in Ottoman *Gegëni* was made more difficult by Ottoman efforts to impose "progress and modernity" via the circles of traditional power that had become fragmented because of new, often unrecognized challengers supported by outside benefactors, including Montenegro.[34] Ottoman plans to reform and to harness greater revenue from taxes, in other words, directly clashed with new local groups who were developing channels that circumvented all state agencies. One of the consequences of these autonomous agents playing off the two states was the creation of new polities and thus political ambitions, spheres of interests, and ultimately local initiatives that would completely transform regional affairs.

Along the newly created Serbian/Ottoman frontier in the Mitrovica district of Kosova just such a new agent of the modern world emerged out of obscurity to transform Boletini's home district into a center

of international intrigue. Isa Boletini's story brings another layer of complexity to this post-Berlin period and further complicates the traditional narrative that emphasizes communal separation and local, pseudonationalistic resistance to Ottoman rule.

A Post-Ottoman Icon: Isa Boletini and Redefining the Balkans

Isa Boletini, one of the key personalities along the Mitrovica border with Serbia, has become part of Kosovar Albanian nationalist mythology in the post–World War I era (Pushkolli 1996) (figure 4.2). Unfortunately, nationalist historians have misrepresented the conditions in that little corner of Kosova that put this quintessential "burrë" in the center of

Figure 4.2 Isa Boletini (1864–1916) (Photo courtesy: Major H.G.A. Reimers, 1914, Source: Netherlands Institute of Military History).

events. In many ways, Boletini proved especially adaptable to the caprices of fortune. As seen on the newly created Montenegrin/*Malësi* border, the process of delineating a frontier could provide a window of opportunity for the right person. As much as Ali Gusi or Ali Pasha Tepelena profited from his base of operations that suddenly became strategically key to empires, so too would Isa Boletini gain access to the larger world with the transformation of his home area into a border zone. In this respect, much as post-Ottoman historians have distorted the stories of Ali Pasha and Ali Gusi, so too have historians mistaken Boletini's actions for simple acts of Albanian patriotism (Boletini 1993).

After 1878, Boletini's little corner of the world became the center of Great Power rivalries. Russia used the area to infiltrate both Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian–administered areas to try to indoctrinate the local Orthodox Slav population (MacKenzie 1967). Related to these efforts was the fact that a newly established Serbian state used the region to smuggle weapons to pliable allies within Ottoman lands. At the same time, the Austro-Hungarians created a network of churches and monasteries in the larger region that served to disseminate pro-Habsburg Catholic propaganda. Isa Boletini quickly learned that making himself relevant to the many agents trying to promote these agendas would ultimately earn him a place in regional politics. In no time, he and his growing cadre of allies in the region went beyond being petty smugglers and hired guns to becoming players in arenas well beyond the confines of northeast Kosova.

Boletini's place in Kosovar iconography today in this context clashes with the more complicated reality that we find in areas newly designated Serbia or Montenegro. Recall that in Niš, Serbia's difficulty with establishing authority in many "mixed" areas resulted in officials allowing locals to continue to use older, Ottoman-era social, economic, and administrative practices. In time, this led to greater possibilities of self-assertion as well as strong commercial, political, and social bonds across the border. It is with these cross-border networks that Boletini initially built his local power base. Evidently, these networks were reflective of links not only with fellow *Gegë* but more regularly with local Slavs with whom he would do business.[35] These multiethnic links actually earned him a lucrative piece of the smuggling business (mainly guns, livestock, wood, and wheat), which emerged with the creation of international frontiers between Serbia and the Ottoman Empire.[36]

By the turn of the century he would use the human and material resources at his disposal to actively protect both local Christians and Muslims from both the Russian-backed proselytizers building

schools in the area and unruly Ottoman troops who were sent to secure the frontiers. In this respect, Boletini operated within a local code of values that meant protecting kin and neighbors, be they *Gegë*, Turks, or Slavs. His reputation as a defender of local rights extended to actively organizing opposition to Ottoman tax collectors as well as opposition to the bullying tactics of Serb nationalists and their Russian patrons seeking ways to instigate intercommunal violence in the Mitrovica area.[37] In the context of Mitrovica's charged place in international politics, this translated into a number of opportunities that transcended any ethnic or confessional barriers.

Because Boletini was seen as a social force that could not be controlled, Russia and its allies often demanded that the Ottoman state take action to deal with him. The problem was that Boletini had effectively created the local gendarmerie and was thus fully integrated into a very local borderland dynamic that proved cost-effective for all the parties involved. Moreover, he was far too well established for any one power to ever want to fully challenge militarily. In many ways, Boletini had by 1900 entrenched himself so well into the regional political economy that it was impossible for government authorities in Kosova or Niš to contemplate direct military action against him.[38] It is clear, for instance, that Boletini was not only playing one state off the other, but he also consciously contributed to a process that would have far-reaching consequences over how his actions were recorded for posterity. In this regard, Boletini's active role in instigating violence at crucial moments in time proved that he at least partially understood how the larger world operated.

Eventually, his local affiliations got him into trouble in the larger world. It was well known that he and his heavily armed allies had an ongoing rivalry with the Russian consul, whose often impetuous behavior vis-à-vis Mitrovica's people created many enemies. Long the defender of Mitrovica's inhabitants in such situations, Boletini and his men became directly involved in an incident with the arrogant consul that eventually led to the latter's murder.[39] The death of the unpopular and confrontational consul may have solidified Boletini's reputation as Mitrovica's honorable guardian, but the incident created an international scandal that forced Istanbul's hand. Eventually, the Ottoman state had to rein in Boletini and put him under voluntary "house arrest" in Istanbul.

By using their age-old strategy of bringing Boletini to Istanbul, the Ottoman state initiated a period of rehabilitation for this once nobody, giving Isa Boletini the chance to maneuver his way into the heart of the state's administrative hierarchy. Incorporated into the

palace guard for several years, Boletini would build links in Istanbul that were rare for rural Kosovars of his social background; the quintessential "wild man" that the Tosk Ottoman elite so feared was making inroads in their world.

Because of this "exile," Boletini slowly integrated himself into Sultan Abdülhamid's trusted corps of indigenous western Balkan allies. These alliances proved valuable for the palace, which constantly had to devise ways to placate the various factions found throughout Kosova.[40] The sultan needed tough local allies such as Boletini to help enforce a set of state centralization measures that expanded on the earlier *Tanzimat* reforms temporarily shut down by the events of the 1875–1880 debacle. Somewhat ironically, it was the very sultan who had dissolved the parliament and suspended the liberal constitution who was using men such as Isa Boletini to impose *Tanzimat*-era state centralization schemes in the western Balkans. The inclusive, pluralistic vision known as Ottomanism (*Osmanlılık*) was back on the agenda (Hanssen 2002).

By way of emphasizing a stronger regionalism and the politicization of Islam and Orthodox Christianity as viable answers to European expansionism, the Ottoman state once again invested in mobilizing society to secure through mass politics a polity capable of surviving the twentieth century (Dawn 1973). Of those recruited to accomplish this—through curious role reversals—were local power holders such as Isa Boletini. The *effendiyya* who used to scorn men such as Isa Boletini as a violent, uncivilized relic of the past observed from their positions of exile or silent opposition this quintessential *ayan/bayraktar* assisting in implementation of the very reforms that they had intended to use to "civilize" him.

In time, Boletini's role in shaping policies in Kosova made the former villager from Boletin an invaluable asset to not only the sultan but also some European powers.[41] What happened after he was anointed Sultan Abdülhamid's intermediary/hammer thus constituted a shift in the political environment of Kosova. But this shift did not necessarily serve either Boletini or the sultan well over the long term.

The 1908 Paradox

Boletini's power and influence, being so firmly linked to the sultan, was equally threatened by the Young Turk revolt of 1908. While others in the region celebrated the demise of the Hamidian regime, for many, including Boletini, the events in the summer of 1908 threatened their economic lifeblood and political security. This constitutes yet another important set of issues the historiography has all but

ignored since the end of World War I. While the literature tends to see the events taking place in the region as an undifferentiated, universal expression of opposition linked by a common, often "ethnic" unity, there were considerable numbers of local "Albanian," "Serb," "Greek," or "Bulgarian" stakeholders, including Boletini, who were adversely affected by the sudden shift in power.

Instead of revealing a shared ideological, spiritual, or even economic goal, the events leading to and immediately following the revolt in Manastir suggest a complicated exchange of competing interests. As far as Isa Boletini was concerned, the events surrounding the Young Turk revolution would displace him from one of the concentric circles of power in the region, thrusting him into a global arena that he would ultimately prove incapable of controlling. Boletini's subsequent conversion into an arch enemy of the "infidel" Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) movement, in turn making him a loyalist to the sultan at a time when many of his Kosovar neighbors (and future historians) were investing in the idea of revolution, forced upon him important new challenges (as well as opportunities) that extended well beyond his Mitrovica/Drenica/Kosova base of operations.

Perhaps the most evocative incident that revealed to Isa Boletini just how divided Kosova was took place in the summer of 1908 as people in northern Kosova reacted to the news of a local revolt led by the Tosk captain Resneli Ahmed Niyazi Bey in Manastir on July 5, 1908 (Niyazi Bey 1910: 23–26). As evidenced in the photos (see figures I.1, I.2, and I.3), activists in Kosova directed a massive demonstration of support for Niyazi and the larger anti-Hamidian opposition beginning to stir up rebellion.[42] The result in Kosova of this mobilization was a face-off at an eastern Kosova railhead called Ferizaj (Firzovik) (Çelik 2004: 98–111; Hanioğlu 2001: 271–273; Malcolm 1998: 236–238).

This amazing scene of at least two opposing factions inside Kosovar society—one in support of the sultan's legitimacy and the other, a wide range of "rebels" numbering up to 6000—facing-off on the plains outside Ferizaj is indicative of the shifting interests of very different independent actors in the region.[43] According to the Ottoman official negotiating with the still peaceful "rebels" led by Nexhib Draga and Bayram Curri, the sultan's loyalists, including Isa Boletini, had gone to Ferizaj to "discipline" the rebels with force. The problem was Boletini's men were outnumbered.[44] Indeed, reports suggest that the pro-CUP numbers swelled as locals began to realize the opportunity. The "revolt" in Kosova, as much as those surfacing throughout Macedonia, suggest that this was a perfect example of the uncommitted majority waiting on the sidelines to see the results of a conflict

between a local contingency of rebels and the state before taking sides. As in most successful rebellions, it was the sense that the tides had changed that suddenly tilted the scales for one faction over another. In this case, the forces of Boletini and other loyalists to the sultan would have to retreat, forced to stand aside (but not change sides), as a loosely formed committee, emboldened by local successes, sent telegraphs to Istanbul demanding the restoration of the 1876 Constitution.[45]

The telegraphs sent to Istanbul were addressed to the Grand Vizier, a Tosk named Mehmed Said Pasha, and the sultan. What is interesting about the demands for the restoration of the constitution is the justifications made by signatories for defying the sultan. From the Mufti of Üsküp/Skopje, Hasan Fehmi, to a number of *bayraktars* and merchants, all self-appointed state loyalists (numbering 190 people in all), the call for change in the empire was based not on separatist demands but on more parochial, individual considerations (Sönmez 2007: 86–91).

Again, our models of analysis have forced us to misinterpret these confrontations to mean something much more traumatic to the state than was actually the case. It was the political failure of the sultan to follow the suggestions of Mehmed Said Pasha, whom he fired after being advised to restore the 1876 Constitution, and not the "natural" desire of Albanians, Bulgarians, Serbs, and *Rum* to separate from the empire that accounts for the subsequent tensions. Such political failures on the part of the sultan and his advisors resulted in open and violent resistance in Kosova and Macedonia in the next few months. Again, this violence should not be mistaken for a desire for independence among the protestors. The antiregime agents argued for the restoration of the constitution as a concession to help preserve the empire, not to see its demise. Not surprisingly, within months of the ascension of the new regime, Boletini found himself leading a politically complicated rebellion against this new Young Turk government. Unfortunately for him, the local revolts that he directed translated into massive countermeasures that broadened into state repression, violence, and, ultimately, political confusion for all the inhabitants of the western Balkans.[46]

CONCLUSION

In time, the heavy-handed application of policies meant to streamline the modernization process opened the doors for external intervention and internal chaos that made defeat in the 1912–1913 Balkan wars possible. One of the men who survived the 1878 crisis, profited from the demise of an old order, and found himself on the wrong side of history in 1908 nevertheless remained an agent of modernity, albeit

along the fringes. As we now know, Boletini's efforts to reposition himself in the world as a rebel against the CUP government and its new methods of instituting modern state reforms failed to secure his Mitrovica homeland from disaster.[47] As the CUP adopted perhaps the most destructive policy for the western Balkans—the conscription of tens of thousands of able-bodied men from Kosova and their deployment to fight in distant provinces of the empire—Boletini's ability to wedge himself into regional and international politics had come this time at the expense of his homeland.[48]

In time Boletini would position himself as a nationalist by backing some of the very leaders of the CUP in exile (such as Qemali) who would be given an opportunity to carve out a twentieth-century niche for some *Arnavutlar/Shqiptarë*. His story thus provides a fine example of how changing external conditions influenced decisions of men such as Boletini. At the same time, the events that led Boletini to London in the end of 1912 cannot be associated with his channeling a "natural" patriotism to service the hopes and dreams of an "Albanian people." After all, the consequences of Boletini's actions, largely ignored by Kosovar historians who see him as a champion of the still unimaginable Albanian nation-state, actually contributed to a condition that made it impossible for native peoples to continue to defend themselves against the modern state.[49]

The subsequent violence afflicting the region could hardly be described as cunning, heroic, or in any positive sense linked to a patriotic "agenda." The results of these so-called "Albanian" rebellions actually caused a shift in the balance of power that led to the swift capture of Kosova by Serbian and Montenegrin troops in 1912, and the brutal, final annexation of more than half of Geg-inhabited lands by Slav states.[50] It is also this chain of events that ultimately led to Austria-Hungary's declaration of war on Serbia in 1914; the collapse of the Ottoman Empire; and Boletini's own murder, alone, on a bridge in the mountains of Montenegro.

It was not only Boletini's fault, of course. The actions taken by innumerable people, including *Gegë* with ambiguous CUP loyalties such as Nexhip Draga, Essad Pasha Toptani, and Hasan Prishtina, alongside those who had more clearly invested their futures with the reformed Ottoman state, including Shaykh Daud of Tepelena and Haxhi Ali, all contributed to the chaotic mixture of competing interests and subordinated ambitions that ultimately led to military disaster in 1912.[51]

As discussed throughout this chapter, the cases of Isa Boletini and various *Malësorë* proved that partnership with the Ottoman state was indispensable to leaving a larger mark on the region's post-Berlin

history. At the time, none of the locally based *bayraktar* and their rivals had the resources to secure the alliances that they needed to maintain leverage in a region transformed by the creation of nation-states. This was clear with the simple fact that a relative military stalemate would exist until 1912. As a result, the day-to-day experiences of all the principals were mostly shaped by an interlocking dynamic of reaction and counterreactions by local stakeholders and the various states involved. In many ways, a form of administrative rupture took place in this setting, resulting in quite different operational (and thus competing) models surfacing as each state tried to cope with the actions of men such as Isa Boletini and the *Malësorë*. These dynamics in turn affected locals who were potential allies to all the principals involved, be they aspiring regional leaders, ambitious *Tanzimat*-era parliamentarians such as Abdyl Frashëri, or the various state bureaucracies arising to create new realities on the ground. In the end, all of these cases of "friction" constituted possible foundations to larger, long-term institutional and socioeconomic change.

In sum, what was taking place in the western Balkans during the 1878–1912 period reflected an increasingly counterproductive relationship between the Ottoman state and its subjects. The initial process of enforcing frontiers, for instance, created over a short period of time a disastrous set of conditions for communities found on the wrong side of these boundaries. That said, in this period where boundaries began to be used to differentiate "ethnic" groups and Muslims from Christians, the nature of the empire itself was still being pushed beyond the artifacts of confrontation (the modern versus tradition, us versus them) because locals could actually force the state to reconsider their ambitions. In the end, the frontiers were as much the legacies of local agency as of imperial power. I believe that this aspect of the modern state helps us recalibrate the underlying contradictions that inform our understanding of our world. It also forces us to realize that while there are consequences for the actions of men, they may not lead to results entirely suitable for a nationalist apologia of modernity. The natives did have a role in a history that was not animated by ethnonational interests alone. The next and final chapter will help bring more detail to this claim by discussing at length the paradoxical role of education in the expansion of modern power.

5

Learning the Wrong Lesson: Local Challenges to Educational Reform

There is little dispute that the school plays a major role in the narrative of the modern nation. It is one of the central institutions expected to service the state's ambition to inculcate in its society a sense of citizenship, loyalty, and general obedience. It is also connected to the process of building a collective identity, both by disseminating a common narrative about historical claims and by codifying the national language. In this respect, scholars have assumed that the early efforts to expand education to previously "uneducated" communities is at the heart of the requisite modernization process and thus a logical source for much of what we today associate with ethnonational identity. Accompanying these associations is the logical assumption that such investments in education necessarily had the important socioeconomic, cultural, and, finally, political impact on targeted communities.[1]

Historians studying Ottoman modernization policies have basically made this parallel a foundational component to their study of the *Tanzimat* and Hamidian eras (Hanioğlu 2001: 82–129, 289–311). Much as in other European examples, scholars have assumed that the state's underlying ambition with education was to forge a collective consciousness among its subjects and inculcate a sense of belonging to the larger empire.[2] In the context of the Balkans, this automatically implies that the school was built to socially and culturally change the targeted population.

Curiously, Balkan historiography has generally ignored this important fact about the Ottoman state's policy in the region. Perhaps there has been reluctance to acknowledge the extent of Ottoman state education reform because the very presence of such an elaborate educational program challenges the easy assumptions that the peoples

living in the western Balkans were under a state of oppression and in their very nature opposed the Ottoman presence. Traditionally, the nationalist myth highlights the existence of "national" schools, often run in defiance of Ottoman decree (Dakin 1993: 16–23; Stavrianos 1958: 518–521). Presumably, these schools constituted the backbone of the clandestine "nationalist struggle" against Ottoman and/or Phanariot cultural hegemony from the late eighteenth century onward. The problem is that a vast majority of the children who did receive an education in the crucial 1840–1912 period never attended any of these "nationalist" schools but rather Ottoman state institutions. Such a crucial detail compels us to take another look at just what is going on in the region in respect to education.

This chapter explores why utilitarian models of the school assume far too much, in respect to not only a post-Ottoman nationalist narrative that requires an institutional explanation for the emergence of ethnonational activism but also how scholars study education more generically as it pertains to the modern state. In this challenge of the prevailing assumptions about the role of education in modern societies, I suggest that the school as a site of interaction or "friction" also needs to be seen as yet another arena within which shifting interests compete for state resources, patronage, and local leverage. Although numerous generalizations about the "success" of the educational system are supported by data that suggest a dramatic increase in the actual construction of schools, the literature proves misleading in explaining, first, why this construction boom took place and, second, what kind of impact it had on the local population (Fortna 2002: 26–41).

In contrast to previous characterizations of the relationship, I argue that the Ottoman-funded school more often than not served as a weapon in the arsenal of members of local communities to leverage the modern state. The ability to make demands on state officials for the construction of schools in the context of attempts to reform the larger society gave some locals a field in which to compete for power among themselves. In other words, rather than simply concurring with conventional wisdom that the school was the actualized extension of the state's control over events or a medium through which "nationalists" rallied the masses, a closer look at how some local actors recognized opportunities in educational reform to gain local political or economic leverage reshapes our appreciation for the kinds of options available to the people of the Ottoman western Balkans.

It should be clear that I do not dispute that Ottoman officials, intellectuals, and entrepreneurs believed that the school was an ideal vehicle for social engineering purposes. Their conviction, however, that it would

have a utilitarian purpose was modified over time, evolving along with other state-building strategies. Such patterns of strategic adjustment offer us one last opportunity to represent more accurately how *effendiyya* educational strategies and goals differed from the mass educational schemes that many so-called nationalists supposedly hoped to implement.

A History of Education Reform in the Ottoman Empire

To understand this process fully, it is necessary to provide some historical background to the school as an instrument of the numerous states involved. In the Balkans it was the 1878–1908 period that saw the school becoming the central battleground for competing imperial states. Much like their counterparts elsewhere, the Italian, Austro-Hungarian, Russian, and Ottoman state–funded schools in the Balkans were from the very start meant to monitor, supervise, and manipulate local populations in a way best suited to long-term imperial ambitions. These ambitions, however, were not new. They mirrored the educational reforms started during the reign of Sultan Mahmud II (1808–1839), adopting early Italian and French pedagogical theories, which placed special value on the state's capacity to penetrate dispersed and culturally distinct regions (Davidson 1963: 114, 246; Sabahaddin 1918: 25–35). Recall that it was under Mahmud II that state institutions took on a more interventionist role in shaping the Ottoman society at large. In this respect, it would almost seem obvious that a process in which the military, medical, and bureaucratic schools initiated by Mahmud II had successfully laid the foundation for the extensive *Tanzimat* reforms and the Hamidian period that followed (Berkes 1998: 99–110).

The fundamental issue for the *Tanzimat*-era reformers who followed, especially Midhat Pasha, was addressing shortcomings in the "traditional" educational system that often failed to produce large numbers of dependable state agents.[3] In this light, the *Tanzimat* reforms expanded the network of instructional programs to better fine-tune the skills of future bureaucrats. The professional school (*Mekteb-i Mülkiyye*), for example, was primarily intended to help build a civil service and aid in developing a bureaucracy that would expand the role of the recently instituted Ministry for Public Education (Somel 2001: 65–78). Likewise, the School of Civil Administration, founded in Istanbul in 1859 and later expanded by Abdülhamid II's regime, aimed to integrate people from outside Istanbul, especially the Balkans, into the state bureaucracy.[4] This seemed to be successful in regard to *Arnavutlar*. By 1879, 15 percent of those who graduated

from the school were identified as *Arnavut* (Çankaya 1971: 3: 5–63). More important still to the effort of integrating the western Balkans into the core of the empire were the professional schools built in provincial capitals and towns as well as military science institutions that were to help in professionalizing the military among on-duty soldiers stationed throughout the provinces (Esad 1892).

Surprisingly, from the moment Midhat Pasha instituted these reforms, the Ottoman state actually took a secondary role in administering the schools expected to change provincial Ottoman society. As already seen, the reforms of the late 1860s began with considerable administrative autonomy for the provinces that were initiated by the *Vilâyet Nizamnamesi* (Regulation of Provinces). This meant that locally based administrators, *Toskë* for the most part, would be formally trained in local Ottoman schools and then expected to help administer the provinces on behalf of the state. Free to conduct the affairs of state that best reflected local political realities, these governors and administrators drawn from *Toskalık/Toskëri* were permitted flexible use of a wide range of resources to work with local notables who often sent their sons to these schools (Ortaylı 1985: 56–67, 74–77). This agenda was solidified with the 1869 Education Law.

The 1869 Education Law, comprising 198 articles, constituted a joint effort linking the interests of Safvet Pasha, the Minister of Public Education, Sadullah Pasha, the Director of Military Schools (which were under German influence), and Kemal Ahmed Pasha, the head of the Department of Education at the *Şura-yi Devlet* (Council of State).[5] Organizationally, the law called for a five-tiered hierarchy: a Qur'anic elementary school in every village or quarter; an elementary school (*rüşdiye*) in every town of 500 households; a middle school (*idadi*) in every town of 1,000 households; a lycée (*sultaniye*) and higher schools, including teachers' colleges for men and women in every provincial capital (Ergin 1977: 2: 412–417).

While intending to consolidate a state role, almost immediately local entrepreneurs co-opted the system. As a result, a number of dysfunctions emerged as competing factions battled over access to these well-funded institutions. Out of this institutional matrix emerged a conflicting set of strategies that locals adapted throughout the empire to best exploit the new leverage that these schools offered them. Families of a certain status, for instance, first sought access to these schools for their children and then vied for control over such local initiatives. As discussed throughout this chapter, this proved to clash directly with the social engineering agendas of Istanbul-based reformers. A good example is the case of Davud Şükrü Efendi Boriçi (Clayer 2006: 224).

Native-born Reformer

The central issue, as seen by recent scholarship on the Hamidian era school in particular, was an apparently straightforward campaign to indoctrinate and consolidate the loyalties of previously disparate Muslim and Christian subjects such as those found in the western Balkans (Akpınar 1997; Rogan 1996). While there was a common goal, these projects proved contentious because of the clashing strategies that emerged when locals were given the responsibility of applying "educational reform" in a way most suitable to local conditions. This is certainly the case with Boriçi.

A native of *Gegëni*, Boriçi was appointed in the 1860s to inspect religious schools in Shkodër with the stated goal of strengthening the spiritual foundations of the region's historically autonomous subjects as well as integrating them. From the fact that at least some of the reformers had appointed him, it is clear that Boriçi shared the goals of other Young Ottomans. He would become somewhat of a problem for Istanbul, however, once he attempted to adapt to conditions continuously shifting because of local political maneuvering.

For one, Boriçi advocated the use of the local language (a form of *Gegnishte*) in the school curricula to inculcate effectively a sense of commonality between the students studying in the state schools and the larger Ottoman world. While the latter was a goal shared by Boriçi's patrons in Istanbul, unfortunately for him, some officials did not fully believe that using a local dialect to instill a sense of greater association with the empire and its long history was the way to do it.

This conflicted reaction from some elements of the Istanbul bureaucratic elite is curious in some ways since many believed standardizing the local language for its use in schools to be crucial for the purposes of better indoctrinating a sense of commonality in the polyglot empire. The fact, however, that it was *Gegnishte*, itself not deemed as a proper "civilized" language, was the issue. To Istanbul-based authorities, the languages that needed emphasizing were those found in Istanbul schools such as Ottoman, Persian, French, Greek, and Arabic. It was by using such tools of modernity as the standardized, universal language that the highland peoples of the empire could be brought out of their "state of backwardness." Because of these clashing strategies, Boriçi was removed from his office and the conservatives in Istanbul won for the time being.

Boriçi's removal demonstrates the existence of conflicting strategies over how best to integrate the region.[6] Feroz Ahmed (1984: 56) used the phrase "social engineering" to describe the late-nineteenth-century

effort to inculcate, through schools, the collective loyalty of Ottoman citizens to the state. This appears to have been no different to the Ottoman *Tanzimat* period, as far as scholars studying "modernization" strategies are concerned (Alkan 1996). Boriçi's case seems to reaffirm the tendency to see education as both a straightforward tool of modernity and a nationalist wedge.

Here lays one of those areas of contention that does not receive as much attention as it deserves: the intended goals of an educational program. As noted earlier, the civilizing mission seemed to be a powerful as well as an easily identifiable strategy of the Ottoman reformers. These reformers openly discussed tactics developed around clear ideological divisions in the general Ottoman (and European) society. Some historians have suggested that these debates over schools and the school curricula marked a decisive period for the creation of modern identities among Ottoman subjects (Karpat 2001: 96–99). Historians who have focused on Albanians in particular posit that clashing interests between "Albanian patriots" and Ottoman reforms helped to consolidate the parameters of a non-Ottoman identity that were crucial for political activists (Kostovicova 2002).

Contrary to the claims of these twentieth-century historians, however, the activities of the local population were not limited to creating schools that used local dialects to resist the Ottoman state or the *Rum* Orthodox church institutions supposedly built to subjugate them. Reports suggest instead that the *Gegë* and *Toskë* living in the communities targeted for incorporation actively lobbied Istanbul and their agents such as Boriçi for the construction of government schools in their communities. For one, Boriçi's agenda was not their subordination. Instead, many realized that diverting the flow of government or church funds to the community was actually an important source of otherwise difficult to come by state funds. Likewise, securing the construction of schools in the community helped to strengthen political as well as commercial links with Istanbul. This provided another economic incentive for locals to reach out to all the potential patrons of their communal indoctrination. In the end, both church and state agents, and local actors, recognized the crucial contribution that this exchange through the erection of the school made.

For our case here, we can appreciate the reactive element to Ottoman educational reform once we recognize that the early efforts to engage local communities had become commonplace in the Geg and Tosk regions.[7] By the Hamidian period, the Ottoman state actively recruited local leaders by employing them to administer newly built schools. In 1905, for instance, in an attempt to co-opt a previously rebellious subject, the state paid the local *Malësor* Hasan Murat to maintain the middle school in the key border town of Gusi/Gosine.[8]

Clearly, in such cases, authorities saw the school as an instrument for directly engaging adults as much as it aspired to train children. Any number of documents attest to this effort, usually couched in a language eager to ensure an economic as well as ideological dependency on the state among locals. The appointment of Hasan Murat to manage a middle school built in the strategically key Gusi/Gosine and Plava cluster of villages high in the *Malësi* thus reflects an important political utility to the school. It was expected to serve as a means to employ not only Hasan Murat but also other key members of that community while it educated a new generation of subjects. This implies that the Ottoman state used school jobs to "bribe" local leaders to ensure their cooperation.[9]

To fully appreciate this new relationship between Hasan Murat and the Ottoman state, however, we must remember that what contributed to the growing leverage that locals had in implementing state-building reforms was the intensifying rivalry between the numerous states operating in and around the region. Often, the competition among Austria-Hungary, Russia, Italy, France, and Greece manifested itself in schools.

As seen in previous chapters, the frontiers along the Ottoman Empire's northern edges were animated by Russian ambitions to fill a political void among Slavic-speaking peoples and Austria-Hungary's efforts to counter these measures.[10] Parallel to the growing influence that Russia and Austria-Hungary asserted in the Ottoman Balkans during the late 1870s were rising diplomatic tensions between other regional powers. From neighboring states such as Serbia, Greece, and Bulgaria to activists with outside patronage, the western Balkans increasingly became an arena in which investment in schools could extend the influence of outsiders while empowering locals. Among the more intriguing contributions to this was Italy.

Italy would be especially important in creating a new range of possibilities for the indigenous population that transformed politics in the southern Balkans as well as, ultimately, the way in which state officials viewed schools as instruments of state power.[11] Juxtaposed to the long assumed "right" of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire to protect Balkan Catholics, a new set of tensions developed that created opportunities for local political entrepreneurs. What emerged, in other words, was an interstate rivalry that mobilized locals as proxies via education.

The Italian/Austro-Hungarian Rivalry

As a crucial player in the Adriatic Sea, Italy identified Austria-Hungary and Greece as its primary rivals in the Balkans. This is significant in

several ways. First, it reflects a change in the kind of influence that Austria-Hungary enjoyed in the region. Over the previous 50 years Austria-Hungary and their Vatican allies were busily investing in the education of local Catholic elite to secure close relations with the prominent Catholic families in the region. Documents dating as far back as 1849 demonstrate how the *Propaganda Fide* and the Shkodër-based archbishop sought to introduce teachers in various village church complexes as a means of securing their loyalty as well as the anticipated Austrian diplomatic assistance.[12] By the 1860s, the newly created Italian state threatened that formula. Italian interests seemed to be primarily informed by commercial ambitions that ultimately connected nascent imperial aspirations with the ongoing success of individual merchants in securing lucrative trade links in the region. Austria-Hungary perceived this as an infringement on their natural sphere of influence in the Balkans (Wandruszka 1974: 34–51).

The problem posed for regional states such as Austria-Hungary, Italy, and Greece in this period was that the local communities were not simply acting along the cultural lines imposed on them by state officials. Rather, local community leaders proved adept at securing some leverage through creating alliances with authorities in Istanbul, Rome, Athens, or any other rival state when conditions dictated. Locals in search of autonomy from, for instance, the Orthodox patriarch based in Istanbul could solicit the support of one European country or another for the construction and maintenance of locally run Orthodox schools. In September of 1903, the request for 150 napoleons a year by a Durrës/Draç Orthodox school's administration highlights the lengths that locals were prepared to go in lobbying even outside powers such as France to keep the *Rum* church at arm's length.[13]

Despite these local nuances, a dramatic increase in the construction of faith-based schools, hospitals, and other government buildings, many built with foreign money, took place after 1878.[14] Tosk communities throughout the southern frontier regions thus manipulated the rhetoric of sectarian patronage that dominated European diplomacy to secure sponsorship from outside parties.[15] This surge in construction did not correspond, however, with a rise in sectarian differentiation. Other factors linked to commercial opportunities as well as development opportunities for children animated this rise in construction.

At the time, the *Rum* church based in Istanbul hoped to create a cultural monolith that would eliminate the particularistic loyalties of the many Tosk and Bulgarian/Macedonian Orthodox communities in the region. At the heart of the Patriarch's concerns were the indicators of significant shifts in local spirituality as *Toskë* demonstrated

an interest in following the dangerous trajectory that the Slavs and Vlachs had recently traveled (Brailsford 1906: 188). Paradoxically, it was actually due to these fears of separatism that the Porte backed the *Rum* church's fight against, among other things, Tosk Orthodox Christian demands for the creation of a Tosk church as the Bulgarians had done since the 1860s.[16] Both the sultan's administration and the *Rum* Patriarch saw eye to eye in respect to these ambitions.

According to European observers sympathetic to the region's *Toskë*, Ottoman reforms were nothing more than tools meant to thwart the expression of the "natural" ethnolinguistic identity of these communities, meaning that they were not considered "Greek" (Matl 1957). European consuls based in the region also believed that the sultan actively prohibited the establishment of institutions, such as nondenominational schools that used the local Tosk dialect as the language of instruction, to placate the *Rum* Patriarch.[17] This seems to be verified with cases reported in the Manastir *vilâyet* by Ottoman authorities, in which villagers in Bihiliste began enrolling their children in a school operated by Protestant missionaries. Upon hearing about this, Korçë *Rum* Orthodox church authorities threatened to excommunicate the Tosk and Vlach families of Bihiliste who sent their children to the school. The choice between expulsion and education was difficult as there was no alternative Orthodox school available to parents.[18] For Ottoman officials, the wise decision was to defer to the *Rum* church.

Similarly, events in Yanya (Janina) linked to the opening of an Italian professional school in the summer of 1902 suggest the extent to which the *Rum* church would counter "incursions" into its theological, political, and cultural sphere of influence. Reports from the French consul suggest that more than 60 local students, including 15 Muslim *Toskë*, studied subjects such as masonry and watchmaking under the mentorship of Italian craftsmen sent by Rome. Representatives of the Janina metropolitan, as well as the inspector-general of the Greek consulate in Janina, M. Gennadis, responded by threatening the excommunication of families who enrolled children in the school. Not only directing their visceral at putative church "subjects," the Greek state and local church officials coordinated an intimidation campaign against school staff and even Italian officials in local and Athens-based newspapers.[19] As is evidenced throughout the period, concern over Italian (and Russian) penetration would animate much of the Greek consuls' activities in the area.[20]

While it would be wrong to suggest that there was an airtight alliance between the Patriarch, the Porte, and Greece, the appearance of such a close relationship in the joint efforts to shut down the

Italian trade school in Janina carried a great deal of political weight in the region.[21] It instilled a perception of political ascendancy that was important in the church's relationship with the local Tosk population during the 1870s and 1880s. As demonstrated below, it was often through church and Greek state officials that local *Toskë* issued complaints, sought patronage, and, indeed, educated their children. For many, in other words, the Ottoman state, at least until the late 1880s, had at best a distant claim to authority among the region's various Muslim and Christian communities.

Suggestively, the French consul believed that there were consequences of this, namely, the locals lacking of a firm cultural link to the general Ottoman world. For instance, in an extensive report on the education system in Janina in the 1880s, the French consul notes that because of the complete lack of state schools, the Muslims of the area did not speak Ottoman Turkish. Rather, they spoke their native *Toskërisht* and dialects of the Greek and Italian languages that they used to conduct trade.[22]

For his part, the Italian consul in Janina believed that Ottoman administrators demonstrated an open disdain for education. Their main task was simply to suppress the native language demands being made by certain activist priests, not to invest limited funds on education. Ironically, this aggressive suppression of a phenomenon that was hardly unique to the Balkans forced many Muslim *Toskë* into the hands of *Rum* Orthodox schools. In fact, it was for these reasons that officials from Italy, sensing an opportunity to champion local interests, began to invest in secular educational institutions in a region that had been traditionally associated with the Orthodox church.[23]

RESISTING CHURCH AND STATE: CO-OPTING "EDUCATION"

The institutional alliances discussed above illustrate at one level the changing dynamics of power from 1860 to 1912. Initially, at least, the great discrepancy in the number of *Rum* church institutions and Ottoman state–funded schools in the south did not necessarily prove to be of central concern to locals who have been assumed to recent "Greek" incursions.[24] In fact, the large-scale construction of Greek-language schools taking place in the region after 1870 (663 schools to be exact) may indicate that locals actually lobbied to have them built (Blumi 2001: 16). As demonstrated below, the heavy emphasis on "Greek" school construction highlights the dynamics of local ambitions that contradict previous scholarly assumptions about their

significance to the "ethnoreligious" school (Kitromilides 1994: 64–69). In other words, rather than considering the hundreds of schools built during the period as being the exclusive products of state or church ambition, we can interpret this productivity as being partially a result of the manipulation of the shifting ideological and political currents by locals. As much as the components of local politics multiplied since the fall of the *ayan*, as seen in the last three chapters, the multiplication of stakeholders in the functioning of the state may have been the engine behind state educational reforms.

We can gauge this process most effectively by recalling the impact that the Berlin Congress had on perceptions among Ottoman policy makers. As already noted, it had become clear to a number of well-established Tosk members of the Ottoman elite that imperial fragmentation and the political intrigue in Istanbul would have serious consequences for their home areas in *Toskëri*. As often noted, these elite responded by making contradictory demands on the Porte. Initially, however, schools were not seen as a political or cultural end and were not included in these demands.[25]

It is instructive, therefore, that schools would only gradually become an important part of local demands. This, I suggest, reflected the evolving nature of regional political and economic structures that dictated the shifting parameters of the debate around the role of the state in Istanbul. At first glance, it seems straightforward: The more education became an issue of interest to the state, the more locals came to adopt the theme. Cynically realizing that there were funds available for such "development" projects, locals grew adept at soliciting state funds for the construction of schools in their communities.[26] As already suggested, however, there are some discrepancies about just what kind of schools and, more important, where these schools would be built. Rather than demanding the construction of "Albanian schools," something to which both the Patriarch and the Porte were adamantly opposed, local *Toskë* with an expanding network of allies within the state bureaucracy actively lobbied for first Orthodox, and only subsequently, the previously mentioned Italian, Austrian, or Ottoman state schools. To *Toskë* the very value of schools was what kind of benefits would they draw from their construction. This was not an issue of building a universal identity or even strengthening the Ottoman society, but of consolidating power in specific communities.

This is how I explain the apparent failure of so many schools in the late Ottoman era (in today's postindustrial world as well) to fully accomplish what scholars of the modern state presumed were their primary function. Instead of being tools of incorporation, schools

may actually have been tools of differentiation that take on local dynamics. As discussed earlier, while *Toskë* with connections were educated in the best schools that the Ottoman Empire had to offer, the main beneficiaries of Ottoman state largesse had little desire to share with their poorer neighbors locally and almost the entire Geg population to the north. The resulting chasm only became worse as these same, now "educated" Tosk bureaucrats failed to translate all their complaints about the ignorance of fellow western Balkan subjects into government action.

We can observe this by the fact that many of the government policies adopted by the Ottoman Empire in the western Balkans displayed the hand of the Tosk elite, as evidenced perhaps most evocatively in the kind of schools that they allowed the Ottoman state to fund in the north. As seen in previous chapters, members of the Ottoman intelligentsia objectified *Gegë* in ways that resulted in either their neglect or institutionalized subjugation. The *effendiyya* practiced a long-term policy of belittlement that earmarked "savages" for "tribal schools" while permanently stigmatizing them as not unreliable partners in the business of administering the modernizing empire (Deringil 1997: 98–111; Rogan 1996) . When the state did build schools in *Gegalık/Gegëni*, it was on the terms that had been set by a far more contentious process of social engineering ambitions. To the educated elite, certain kinds of schools meant to train the next generation of leaders would be built only in certain communities, and the schools that taught "discipline" and "obedience" and perhaps skills needed for a modern workforce were destined for communities deemed unworthy of more elevated education.

Again, a partial explanation for this is the strong connection between Istanbul and the hometowns of so many of the bureaucrats in the Ottoman state who initiated the investment of state funds in their home regions. This is apparent by the active lobbying of these state officials by locals to build schools in their villages. Contrary to the way corruption is generally viewed today, the state money redirected to *Toskëri* was not simply handed over: the construction of schools required a justification. Locals manipulated the fears of Ottoman reformers, especially given that Hellenic hegemony in the area was most obvious just by the number of schools that the Greek state and the *Rum* church had built. The Ottoman school, as articulated by local demands, was to serve as an impediment to foreign expansionism as much as to keep the local elite financially attached to the Ottoman state.[27]

We see this kind of manipulation of imperial interests along the newly created southern borders with Greece where Istanbul's concerns were especially pronounced. Hussain Bey Dino, brother of

Abbedine Pasha, a former foreign minister of the Ottoman state, used his family's Istanbul connections to secure state and private funds to build a number of schools in villages surrounding his base of Preveza, a coastal community straddling the Greek/Ottoman frontier. What is curious about this case is that Dino actively solicited funds from both the *Rum* church and the Ottoman state over a period of 20 years. In the beginning, he sought funds to build Orthodox-run schools that would be operated by local Orthodox clergy. By the 1890s, however, as the Porte began to dedicate more funds to building its own schools, the same opportunities noted above enabled Hussain Bey, a Muslim, to use Ottoman state fears of losing its Muslim subjects to Hellenism. Hussain Bey Dino began to solicit funding to build those Ottoman schools envisioned by the Porte, often side by side with the "Greek" schools that he had built a decade earlier.[28]

What Hussain Bey's case ultimately highlights is the shifting political fortunes of the Porte in the region and the capacity of certain locals to lobby Istanbul for an extensive investment of state funds to a region that had been previously neglected. Differently put, reform in the western Balkans frequently reflected the influence of particular communities that lobbied for state money to be spent in their districts at the expense of others. How this translates in the region is clear when we compare the rate of state activity in the regions under study here to that in the northern *vilâyet* of Kosova and Işkodra.

State-financed schools appeared in disproportionate numbers throughout the Manastir and Yanya provinces beginning in the 1880s, reflecting the greater influence that *Toskë* had in Istanbul in comparison with *Gegë* further north.[29] As noted earlier, more than 130 government schools were built in Yanya by 1908. In Kosova province, on the other hand, there were only seven Ottoman state–funded primary schools built in the whole densely populated Prishtina *sancak* (district) by the turn of the century (Myzyri 1978: 32). Throughout the northern regions, in fact, schools were built primarily in administrative centers such as Prishtina, Ipek, Yakova, and Prizren as opposed to in villages, despite the importance of the region for Ottoman hopes to maintain a presence in the Balkans.[30] In Manastir and Yanya, on the other hand, schools were built in a large number of villages, replacing traditional *madrasa* as the principal site for rural education.[31]

My explanation for this discrepancy is that while Istanbul feared the expansion of separatist sentiments in the Kosova and Işkodra provinces that straddled the new frontiers, by the 1880s *Toskëri* received most of Istanbul funding largely because of those who lobbied the state. A report from the Interior Ministry in 1880, for example, noted

that the Brăile (Romania) and Sofia-based newspapers *Shqiptari* and *Drita* were agitating local *Toskë* to resist the educational hegemony of local "Greeks" by lobbying Ottoman officials for the construction of Ottoman schools in their villages.[32] Readers of these newspapers were exclusively *Toskë* based in Istanbul and in the region's main towns, suggesting recognition of the collective lobbying power of these geographically fixed interest groups (Kondo 1970).

The educational reforms demanded by some *Toskë*, therefore, must be considered a partial reflection of the political currents circulating in Istanbul and the diaspora at the time.[33] By the 1880s, there was an appetite for reform in Istanbul, and money was readily available to those who knew how to access it. Since *Toskë* were very much a part of Istanbul's power circles, their growing manipulation of Ottoman state concerns resulted in the rapid construction of schools in their home areas. This capacity to divert state funds to their home districts created, in the end, a political (and economic) dynamic that greatly affected how *Toskë* implemented reform throughout the empire during the period and also impacted how the post-Ottoman Balkans would develop.

That said, it was not only through the physical construction of schools that locals were able to balance the colonial ambitions of the *Rum* Patriarch and the Ottoman state. *Toskë* also demonstrated their ability to become an integral part of both the Orthodox and imperial educational system in ways that often thwarted both the sultan's and *Rum* Patriarch's goals to suppress regional manifestations of cultural identity. This tension began to take on the contours of an emerging regional identity that is later hastily categorized as nationalist.

Infiltrating the Imperial School

Observers have suggested that the driving force behind the boom in the construction of Orthodox schools in the period was the state's quest to eradicate Tosk cultural expression. Armed with the power to excommunicate prominent locals who did not comply with church policies and with the Ottoman military at its disposal, the various metropolitans of the region engaged in what one visiting Italian statesmen described as a "politics of occupation" (Schirò 1904: 428–429). Despite the impressions of outsiders who expressed surprise over the lack of violent resistance to such measures, many among the local population did not acquiesce to this form of cultural colonialism. Rather, as is often the case in such situations, locals adapted and used the very institutions meant to eliminate their respective localisms in ways that maximized their resistance to *Rum* (and Ottoman Turkish) hegemony.

Examining how this adaptation took place in the operation of schools proves helpful in illuminating this point. It was often the case, for instance, that after the construction of a school, the *Rum* church appointed a native trained in Greece to teach local students.[34] Seen in its comparative colonial context, the use of locals trained in the metropole was a common tactic practiced by colonial powers everywhere at the time. Indeed, the Ottoman state adopted similar strategies by establishing military, medical, and professional academies in Istanbul and other major cities to train loyal subjects to return "home" and further expand state influence. As already noted, *Toskë* filled the Ottoman state bureaucracy in this way and were beginning to fill the church's inner circles as well.

Ironically, the tactics of using locals to help "indoctrinate" the indigenous population often provided a prime vehicle to resistance to the state and church hegemony. It can be observed, for instance, that despite efforts of the *Rum* church and the Greek consuls, many of the instructors who taught at the "Greek" schools in the region turned out to be advocates of communal rights that contradicted church claims of Hellenic cultural superiority.[35] An early example is the case of Koto Hoxhi (1824–1895), a teacher at the Greek state–funded teachers' college in Qestorat near Gjirokastër. While the teachers' college was meant to build a cadre of like-minded "Greek" Orthodox teachers, Hoxhi secretly taught the *Toskërisht* language and Tosk history to his students, among whom we find the important future activists Pandeli Sotiri and Petro Nini Luarasi. Ultimately, the bishop of Gjirokastër excommunicated Hoxhi. Nevertheless, Hoxhi's ability to conduct such classes for several years demonstrates the limitations of schools in performing the intended colonizing duties (Skendi 1967: 133–134).

One can partially explain the failure to indoctrinate the region's Orthodox population by the fact that a veritable network of like-minded individuals involved in providing local children with an education that contradicted official policies had developed. The active participation of large segments of the community in this process of defying the *Rum* church in its Hellenization program was frequently noted in the archives and newspapers published by the diaspora at the time. This is also made clear in the reports of the Italian consul in Yanya who monitored Tosk efforts to coordinate a common local education policy. *Toskë* in Kolonja, Kastoria, and Ghioriza in the southern areas of the Manastir *vilâyet* worked together with those in Leskovik, Përmet, Gjirokastër, Berat, Vlorë and Devoll, and Filat in the Yanya *vilâyet* to adopt a common demand for schools and use of the indigenous language. Emboldening

them, the Italian consul reports, was the fact that the Ottoman soldiers in the region offered them their direct support.[36]

As local committees advocated more locally run programs, parents, nevertheless, felt confident that their children would both receive a superior education by attending *Rum* Orthodox schools and gain access to important circles of power (Graves 1933: 272). Here is the conundrum facing early advocates of Tosk-orientated cultural development. In time, the Ottoman state, with the help of local representatives, recognized this dynamic and actively sought to improve the drawing power of its own institutions by increasing inducements for those who attended their schools. Lake Ohrid native Ibrahim Temo, for example, one of the four founders of the anti-Hamidian Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), became a student at the Imperial Medical School in Istanbul as reformists actively recruited promising Tosk students like him away from the "Greek" or "Italian" alternatives operating in the south.[37] Ironically, these Ottoman schools provided the social environment for many future Tosk nationalists to meet and organize under the umbrella of the anti-Hamidian CUP that emerged from these schools. The emergence of the CUP leadership from these institutions demonstrates in a dramatic way the failure of state schools to instill loyalty in their students.

There are important sociological factors involved in this dynamic as well. The fact that education became important in the eyes of locals probably increased the necessity (or perhaps the hope) to engage locals in the process of inculcating in children religious or state values. The marked rise in the number of students being sent to schools, however, also empowered local agitators eager to resist more openly the policies of the *Rum* Patriarch. In the case of *Rum* schools, in particular, not only did this mean that more Tosk students would infiltrate the teaching cadre educated by the Greek state, it also meant that more *Toskë* became members of the Orthodox clergy. Papa Kristo Negovani, like Koto Hoxhi before him, was a priest who received his secondary education in Athens on a Greek state scholarship.

What Negovani's generation of agitators did was change the fundamental content of the "Greek" schools and create a new political site in which the still very localized cultural wars of the Ottoman empire could be fought. More specifically, Negovani represented a significant vanguard in efforts to institutionalize the Tosk language by secretly teaching it in church-financed schools. Eventually, Negovani attracted thousands of supporters, leading him to preach the liturgy in *Toskërisht* openly, an act of defiance against church propaganda that at the same time disturbed claims of Hellenist cultural

superiority as well as instigated a harsh campaign by the state against these Tosk clergy.

Negovani's actions caused institutional responses that ultimately intensified the contradictions facing the church and its imperial patron. In the end, Papa Kristo Negovani was murdered for his acts of defiance of the explicit orders of Karavangjelis, the Metropolitan of Kastoria, who condemned the use of *Toskërisht* during mass.[38] The subsequent list of southern Orthodox and Muslim Tosk intellectuals persecuted and murdered by zealots during this heightened period of tension is a long one. Petro Nini Luarasi, Gjerasim Qiriazi, Nuçi Naço, Baba Duda Karbunara, Hamdi Ohri, Said Hoxha, Balil Tahiri, and Sotir Ollani all preached against Hellenism at *Rum* or Ottoman institutions.[39] These men represented what could be called a Tosk movement (much as the one Abdyl Frashëri created in the early 1880s and later articulated in Naim's prose) that challenged the culturally hegemonic forces of Istanbul from the inside, ultimately leading to their persecution by both sovereign entities (Myzyri 1978: 114, 218–220, 226). Ironically, such persecution may have been the underlying generator inspiring future acts of resistance by a population that was not initially inclined to confront the state and church as *Toskë*.

Facing declining support, the Ottoman state began to take the initiative and try to draw students away from Church sanctioned schools. A wide range of "professional" schools received extensive funding from the Porte during this period, including a medical school in Salonika that would prove the key to early twentieth-century Ottoman social history. To attract students to the school, money was set aside for scholarships for the most talented.[40] In addition, by the 1890s, the Ottomans invested in educating Catholic *Arnavutlar/Shqiptarë*, in all probability because of the Austrian, Montenegrin, and Italian efforts to draw these strategically vital groups away from Ottoman influence.[41] Likewise, boarding schools that were generally known to be extensions of the *idadi* level (gymnasium) schools being built throughout the southern Balkans were established in provincial capitals such as Manastir.[42] By 1903, it was possible to find in such schools students from as far away as Crete, Pirlepe (a town in present-day Macedonia), and Dibër, suggesting that the funds were available to allow students from dispersed locations to come to cities such as Manastir to study.[43]

The benefits of leaving their homes to live in a provincial capital such as Manastir for students extended beyond the classroom. Some of these benefits were the relatively abundant cultural amenities accessible to them. Paradoxically, the presence of other, competing schools in the city may have also created new opportunities that undermined

these Ottoman schools' purpose. The fact that government officials linked to these schools tried to impose a rigid "moral" code on them seems to have induced some to consider the Greek, Austrian, or Italian alternatives that were actively recruiting them. Indeed, evidence suggests that a wholesale exodus of students from this particular school in Manastir took place around this time, with one Ali Riza signing the original petition, requesting a transfer to another school.[44]

By 1896, such opportunities inspired a new wave of local cultural activism. Under the guise of Italian schools, an explosion of local culture clubs initiated the transmission of a particular form of collectivist sentiment by way of irregular and often impromptu classes. Cultural clubs such as the *Vllazëria* (brotherhood) based in the southern town of Korçë began to demand the construction of Tosk-administrated schools, a campaign that Italy would, over time, support.[45] Indeed, as will become clear below, widespread support for the use of various forms of the Albanian language/*Gjuha Shqipe* in Ottoman schools created new possibilities for action in the region for both locals and regional state agents.[46] By mobilizing a broad-based interest in the education of Geg and Tosk children, the Italians had succeeded in engendering new forms of organization that would ultimately contribute to the reconfiguration of local loyalties, a hitherto essential component of regional stability.[47] Although this is never acknowledged in the literature, the Italian link to the "Albanian rebirth" needs greater recognition. At the same time, this sudden rise in activism cannot be easily separated from the fact that there was money available to those who advocated for such "community-building" initiations.

The Indigenous School

While most of the *Toskërisht*-speaking population continued to operate from within the institutional dynamics shaped from Istanbul, a small minority believed that the Berlin Congress signaled the opportunity to move beyond the clandestine use of *Toskërisht*. In 1885, with the assistance of influential members of the Tosk elite in Istanbul and Bucharest, local Tosk Christians in Korçë founded the first school for Tosk boys. According to an informant based in Brussels, just as southern lobbying helped secure funds for the construction of Ottoman and church schools in the region, Sami Frashëri's active pressure in Istanbul helped to secure the necessary permits for this project.[48] Beside Sami Frashëri's support from Istanbul, the school also had some local leaders take up administrative positions. The school's first director, for instance, was Pandeli Sotiri. He had been a student of

the previously mentioned Koto Hoxhi in the *Rum* teachers' college in Qestorat and was the editor of the first *Toskërisht* language newspaper of the Ottoman Empire, *Dituria*. As a result of this kind of support from Tosk-Ottoman heavyweights, the school over the first two years proved a relative success: as many as 200 local boys attended it, suggesting to this small group of activists that there was a future for *Toskërisht*-based schools.

In response to the initial success of the Korçë school, Petro Nini Luarasi, Sotiri's fellow student in Qestorat, raised money and helped to establish Tosk schools in several villages nearby.[49] In less than a year, an elaborate educational infrastructure developed to accommodate the material needs of these schools. Textbooks prepared by the Istanbul-based *Shoqëria e të shtypurit shkronja shqip* (Society for the Publication of Albanian Writing), directed by Sami Frashëri and published by the Bucharest group *Drita,* were reportedly used by all these schools.[50] Clearly, a chain reaction was talking place that caused immediate concern with other elements within Ottoman society.

For their part, *Rum* church authorities issued their usual threats of excommunication in response to this rapidly evolving phenomenon. At the same time, despite active support of the school from the native *Toskërisht*-speaking *mutasarrif* of the city, Mahmud Pasha Elbasani, *Rum* officials successfully convinced the Ottoman state to intervene, ultimately resulting in a government decree barring Muslims from attending classes there in 1887. Over time, the effects of *Rum* church lobbying left the school with little formal protection in Istanbul, resulting in a series of setbacks, including the forced exile of Sotiri by the end of 1887.

After Petro Nini Luarasi replaced Sotiri as director, the school had difficulty in attracting additional students. Eventually, Philaretos, the metropolitan of Kastoria, successfully forced Luarasi out of the region, charging him with supporting freemasonry and Protestantism as well as teaching "a language that does not exist." In labeling Luarasi and others associated with the school an "enemy of the faith," a large-scale program of excommunicating the Tosk Orthodox Christians involved in the school started in earnest.[51]

While these attacks were effective, the church's belligerence alone cannot account for the eventual failure of these schools.[52] Ultimately, locals found no clear advantage to sending children to a Tosk-run school that incited so much ire and in all likelihood opened few, if any, doors within the hierarchies of imperial power for those who graduated. With the heavy hand of the government resulting in the arrest of many of the region's activists, there appears to have been some success in limiting the problem as potential activists shied away

from open confrontation and most parents elected to keep their children out of the school (Skendi 1967: 135–137).[53]

This is not to say that efforts to inscribe an indigenous educational system halted altogether. Many still attempted to develop a curriculum and a student body that would eventually infiltrate Tosk and Geg society as a whole. In 1900, for instance, a report from Elbasan, at the edges of the Manastir and Yanya provinces, reveals that efforts in that important trading city began as early as 1875 to install *Toskërisht* as a language of instruction in state schools. Two important local figures, Mehmed Has Topal and Hüssein Zecca [Zeka], were actively engaged in conducting private classes in their homes to help bring students up to speed in their day schools. They also worked with the Bucharest-based group that published the textbooks for the school in Korçë.[54] Five years later, an attempt was made to continue this process on the fringes of Ottoman territories in Corfu, where the well-known activist Gaspare Jakova opened a private elementary school that used both Greek and *Toskërisht* as the languages of instruction.[55]

These isolated efforts reflect the overwhelming failure of local communities to activate a significant nationalist educational movement at this stage. The reason for this rests on the realities of local life and how locals understood these realities. Their perceptions of the limitations to engaging in an open confrontation with the powerful entities in Istanbul suggest a great deal about the nature of late Ottoman politics. Rather than supporting the project of Tosk schools, most locals recognized the importance of remaining firmly embedded in an imperial system that was not necessarily seen as doomed to failure. Thus, by 1898, most advocates of Tosk education recognized that there were few means of pressuring Istanbul for Tosk schools. In a revealing telegram sent to the Porte, for instance, advocates conceded the central role of educating local children to the Ottoman state. In lieu of locally run schools, local leaders and their Istanbul-based patrons demanded that *Toskërisht* be taught *within* the curriculum of those Ottoman state schools already built in the territories.[56]

One important counterbalance to these internal restrictions was the activism of the diaspora, especially in neighboring Romania and Bulgaria. At the top of this list was the effort by rival communities in the diaspora to create a parallel educational system for *Toskë*. The opening of the first *Toskërisht*-language school in Korçë was, for instance, entirely funded by the *Dituria* community in Bucharest. Diamand Tarpo of the *Dituria* faction donated his home for the school and gave funds to print all the textbooks used in the school. In response to *Dituria*'s success, on October 23, 1891, the rival

Drita faction, also based in Bucharest, opened the girls' school in Korçë. In this case, interested civilians were encouraged to help with the school's development. The evangelical Protestants Gjerasim and Sevasti Qiriazi, despite their seemingly conflicting sectarian agenda, worked with the mostly Orthodox *Toskë* in Bucharest to open the school. With funds gathered from a growing pool of donors, Nikolla Naço of *Drita* helped build an additional six rural schools in the Kolonja area in subsequent months (Naçi 1901: 101–103).

On the mechanical side, schools were in desperate need of instructors with the knowledge of a standardized form of *Toskërisht*. To address this, the Romanian-based diaspora invested heavily in training a new generation of educators. In 1892, the first teacher training college was opened in a Bucharest boarding house. Its goal was to prepare new teachers for the number of elementary schools opening up in the brief period of relative educational freedom discussed earlier in this chapter. While there would be continued difficulties for *Toskë* to teach in Ottoman-controlled areas, a number of *Toskërisht*-language schools in Romania and Bulgaria—Brăile, Sofia, Constanţa, and elsewhere—helped to create jobs for these trained teachers. Importantly, while schools in the Ottoman Tosk regions ultimately faded because of a number of factors already discussed, the schools in Romania used to train teachers were able to build within the diaspora an important cadre that took on some aspects of an early "identity" others would associate with nationalism. One of the more important arenas where this took place was a school in Constanţa, Eastern Romania, which Ibrahim Temo, one of the four leaders of the CUP leadership in exile, helped establish (Temo 1939: 96–103).

Built in 1905, the Constanţa school first tackled the problem of illiteracy and the lack of marketable skills among the adult population living in the city itself. The primary goal of the school from the first day it opened its doors was thus to educate working-class students in the evenings. The concern to provide evening education for workers hints at the ideological leanings of those associated with *Drita* and those of the Temo-led faction of the CUP that had by this time split with the CUP faction led by fellow *Toskë*, Ismail Qemali. The members of *Drita* were apparently much more sensitive to the class dynamics at play in their constituent population and openly championed a more inclusive educational agenda.[57]

The curriculum used by the Constanţa school's teachers, Lazar Aleksandri, who taught in *Toskërisht*, and Zaharie Zanfir, who taught in Romanian, should also warn us not to immediately assume that a Tosk-funded school was programmatically a nationalist institution.

Rather, the emphasis on training students, young and old, in usable skills to better find employment in Constanţa, including learning the local language alongside the native tongue, suggests a strong desire to integrate *Arnavutlar/Shqiptarë* into local society. The growing educational infrastructure in Romania, which was far more advanced than in the few communities that had schools in *Toskalık/Toskëri*, may have been established to consolidate a sense of community that emphasized integration into Romania, an expression of communal solidarity among children of Tosk exiles that lasted until the post–World War II era.[58]

In contrast to *Drita*'s efforts in Romania, some of its rivals based elsewhere in Romania and Bulgaria concentrated more of their educational resources in *Toskalık/Toskëri* proper. By most accounts left behind by activists in the region, *Dituria* in Bucharest and *Dëshira* in Sofia had perhaps the largest success in their struggle for influence over Tosk communities still living under Ottoman administration. *Dituria,* for instance, funded the publishing of 80 different schoolbooks and texts, and the Tosk-language press *Mbrothësia* (Progress) in Sofia, operated by *Dëshira*, produced another 50 titles (Dërmaku 2000: 156–157).

It is important to note that most publishers in Sofia had strong connections with Bucharest. Almost all had studied typography in Bucharest, a particularly interesting field when considering the debate over formalizing the alphabet for the *Toskërisht* dialect. There was a perceived need for skilled publishers who would institute a sustained effort to codify a cultural agenda that included dominating the content of *Toskërisht* publications.[59] The graduates of the Bucharest technical schools later started a broad range of publications—*Shqypeja e Shqypenisë, Kalendari kombiar, Drita, Shqipëria, Vetëtima, Lajmtari, Liri e Shqipërisë*—in Bulgaria with money from the elitist *Dituria*. All these publications openly promoted *Dituria*'s choice of alphabet (rivalling other forms advocated by others throughout the region) and published content sent directly by their Bucharest-based allies.[60]

The 1908 Revolt and New Opportunities for Education

As with so many other things, this complicated inter-/intracommunal relationship would change again with the Young Turk revolution. We see this most clearly with an elaborate set of demands made by delegates attending a postrevolution congress organized by the CUP in Dibër. Originally, the organizers of the July 1909 congress intended to unify support for the new CUP regime. Over the course of the proceedings, however, delegates ended up producing a long list of demands for greater local cultural freedom.[61] This ultimately attests to a combination

of the new possibilities that were created by the 1908 revolt that helped intensify the ambitions of intellectuals spurred on by some thinking of a post-Ottoman era. The revolution, in other words, started a new period of regional advocacy whereby new strategies for the school emerged.

Activists based abroad still encouraged locally based activists to pursue *Toskërisht*-language education in face of a new and sympathetic administration in Istanbul. European-based intellectuals such as Midhat Frashëri, Sotir Peci, and others saw an opportunity to forge stronger links to the processes of transformation taking place in larger Europe as they once again tried to standardize the use of a common alphabet. While the so-called Alphabet Congress in Manastir in November 1908 offered *Arnavutlar/Shqiptarë* an opportunity to try once again to bridge regional parochialisms, as noted earlier, important members of the Tosk-Bektashi intelligentsia who made up the CUP would not concede their self-appointed role of bringing civilization and progress to their Geg cousins (Myzyri 1996: 73–102).

These were not strictly "Albanian" meetings by the way. Organizers invited representatives of other "communities" to attend. According to Austrian accounts, groups of Vlachs, Serbs, Greeks, Salonika Jews, and at least seven non-Albanian Muslims attended the meetings.[62] In the end, attempts to implement these reforms into practice started to animate a new kind of Tosk activism. From 1909 onward, a whole new activist program emerged that again focused on education. As defined in the declaration agreed upon at the 1909 Dibër Congress, however, a new collaborative dynamic forged between the Ottoman state and local *Toskë* had its limits. While certain functions would be permitted, a provision introduced in July allowing for *Toskërisht* to be used in schools was revoked by August.[63]

Cultural clubs, on the other hand, were permitted.[64] Well-established cultural clubs such as those found in Elbasan, which in September 1909 was also the venue for another gathering of CUP-linked activists on education, began to emerge.[65] Part of the program agreed upon in Elbasan among the most active participants of these cultural clubs was the creation of a teachers' school (*Shkolla Normale*) that would serve as the institutional foundation for a distinctive educational tradition.[66] This marks an important trend after 1908. As most activism originated in *Toskëri*, the distinctions between Tosk and Geg activism actually intensified in the CUP era (1908–1918).

Again, the preponderance of such collaborations in *Toskëri* is meaningful, even after the revolution.[67] Sharp regionalism persisted among CUP leaders, even as the rhetoric of the party suggested state efforts to unify the disparate regions of the empire. One notable exception was the late 1908 opening of a club in Mitrovica in northern Kosova

by the *kaymakam* Haidar Bey, who originated from Manastir, and two members of the local elite, Ferhand Bey Draga and Mehmed Bey Draga.[68] The program would last from late 1909 to 1912, when war and Serbian occupation terminated all means of sustaining it. In this effort, the sharpened regional differences were successfully suppressed and the project would continue to move forward until 1912.

CONCLUSION

The story of these short-lived, locally run schools and later cultural clubs, glorified by national historians as emblematic of an emerging collective Albanian national identity, outlines the cultural battles that had taken place in some segments of Ottoman society since the 1880s. The failure of these schools suggests, however, that this so-called anticolonial struggle was incapable of garnering local support. Most Tosk leaders, in this respect, seemed to feel that their specific cultural agendas—enhancing local development, literacy, and inculcating a strong sense of unity—would be best served within the very institutions of the imperial state. Many, however, did not see any foreseeable gain in attending poorly funded as well as illegal local schools while Italian, Austrian, Russian, and Ottoman schools offered so much more. In sum, the underlying goals of both state and church officials, along with like-minded "Albanian modernists" who advocated "Albanian" schools were largely unrealizable in the late imperial context.

More generally, the very confines of the empire, as determined by the institutions assumed by modern theories of state to best inculcate loyalty toward the state, shaped the extent to which suspicion toward *Toskë* influenced policy in CUP-run Istanbul. *Toskë* quickly learned the parameters of this new imperial matrix and, with the exception of a few overly ambitious entrepreneurs such as Qemali, practiced an effective policy of lobbying for schools from within the confines of the imperial order. The central lesson to be drawn from this story, therefore, is that practical limits to creating a "national" or "imperial" identity set by the empire or local agitators shaped the very values of both the local population and Istanbul. Historians who have focused on the few local schools erected at the time have failed to grasp this central animating force of the period.[69] Locals understood the repressive capacities of the Ottoman state and *Rum* Patriarch and if they did indeed have the ambition to incite some form of separatist sentiment, they countered Istanbul's centralizing ambitions by infiltrating the very institutions erected to "educate" them. Until 1912, the Albanian and the Ottoman, in other words, were one and the same.

Conclusion

For those of us benefiting from hindsight, it seems obvious that the 1908 revolt resolved little. Not only was there a lack of uniform support for the new regime, as seen with Boletini's stubborn loyalty to the sultan, but even putative "nationalist" Albanians, Greeks, Bulgarians, or Turks could not bridge parochial prejudices toward other Albanians, Greeks, and so on. One of the more important components to this transitional period that partially explains these incongruent actions was the impact that massive demographic shifts had on those who could have been and who would be community leaders. As we have seen, almost all those able to assert some influence on, and thus profit politically from, the transitions taking place throughout the 1860–1912 period had considerable leverage at different stages of interaction with the putative forces of modernity.

That being said, the very fluidity of life, the many internal and external transformations caused by war, economic cycles, and subsequent state reactions covered in this book constantly afflicted temporary polities in different ways. In other words, the dynamics of Ottoman life were such that far too many options still existed for local actors to adjust, adapt, and ultimately escape modern state coercive measures. To the frustration of the Young Ottomans and their Hamidian and Young Turk successors, the modern state in such pluralistic societies required politics, that is negotiation, and multilayered interactions, whose very by-product created numerous channels of opportunity for the peoples of the western Balkans (Özbilgen 2006).

By 1912, this changed for even men (*burra*) as prominent in the region as Isa Boletini. Such agents of history suddenly faced a new challenge: a reconfigured, dispersed community whose labeling under larger identity categories imposed by the outside world shaped the eventual policies of occupation by outsiders. The new forces entering into societies largely depopulated of able-bodied, local men because of destructive military policies of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) regime left once highly contested sociopolitical spaces vulnerable to external interests securing absolute power.

The subsequent state apparatus was managed by people who had no stake in the region over which they expected to rule (Helmreich 1938). As a result, the operating logic was no longer cooperation in developing mechanisms to engage a fellow subject of a heterogeneous state. In other words, by the spring of 1912, the Ottoman western Balkans would become a zone of violence, violence not to subjugate, but to extricate (Halaçoğlu 1995; Hall 2000). The military regimes of Serbia, Greece, Bulgaria, and Montenegro were no longer interested in managing new territories with indigenous communities intact (Pavlović 1926); the operation was expulsion and plunder, a politics of eradication that had already been in practice on the plains of North America, Southern Africa, Central Asia, and soon the Middle East.

The many divisions within the so-called Albanian communities discussed throughout this book also help explain the chaos of the interwar and postwar periods in Albanian, Yugoslav, Greek, and Turkish histories. This is especially the case in borderland areas in the *Malësi*, Kosova, Macedonia, and Epirus. Such political fragmentation resulted in a comprehensive expulsion of the remaining communities of these areas after World War I, a process known today as "population exchanges" that the League of Nations (LON) ruthlessly sanctioned. In a sign of a new set of realities, the independent but politically marginal Albanian state failed to mobilize the new Geneva-based LON to stop the systematic expulsion of Muslim *Gegë* and *Toskë* from their homelands in Serbian-occupied Kosova and Greek-occupied Thrace, Florina, and Janina.[1]

The "modernity" that thus rose out of the ashes of an Ottoman experience of 600 years no longer tolerated nuance; the opportunity to project absolute power allowed planners to forgo the practice of politics, that is, the negotiation of power with locals. Rather, the administrative goal was full-scale extradition of people unfortunate enough to be labeled "minority" or "Turk." In other words, who became these geographically dispersed and persecuted peoples and how they would live or die in a post-Ottoman world largely depended on how they were first categorized by new state bureaucracies and then their ability to "navigate" this nationality criterion sanctioned by the French- and British-dominated "world community" known as the LON (Dragostinova 2009). As a consequence, most of the local self-identified constituent groups highlighted throughout this book would not survive the fall of the Ottoman Empire; they were incapable of surviving outside the post-Ottoman categories of the state. In the process, they lost their voice (the rest of the world no longer had to engage them) and ultimately their role in history.

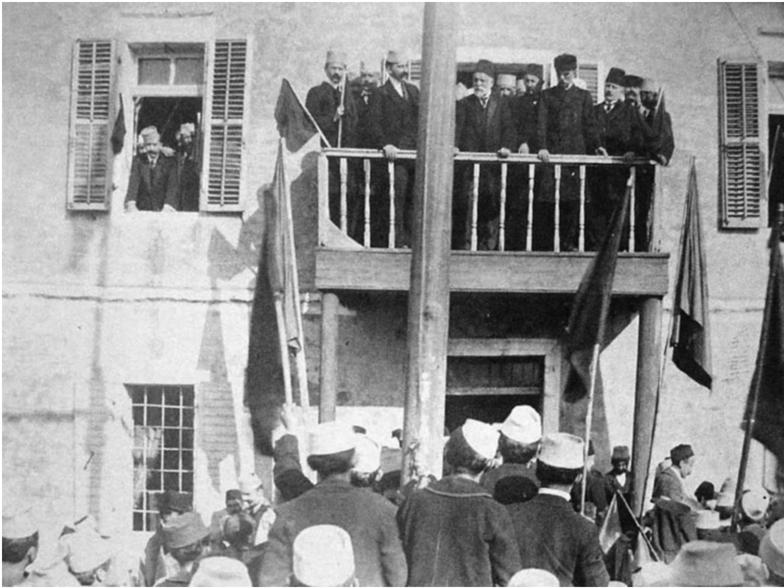


Figure C.1 Original photo of Ismail Qemali and his fellow delegates celebrating the creation of an Albanian state backed by a coalition of states in November 1912. (Photo courtesy: Marubi, permission generously granted by the Albanian Historical Institute/Instituti i Historise, Tirana, Albania).

Their fate has been indelibly linked to the Ottoman's fate and the contingent nature of their existence, which has over the decades been lost with the Ottoman story in the western Balkan historiography. Their history has now become part of a larger "national" story. As seen in the image of Ismail Qemali on the cover of this book, the narrative of the nation often required asserting inaccurate scenarios in even such crucial moments as the "nation's" birth; an entire generation of past leaders with strong Ottoman, Kosovar, Malësor, Catholic, or Sunni links could be airbrushed out of the past if current leaders see fit. Figure C.1 is the original photo of the event, clearly testifying to Albania's Ottoman experience. It was the goal of this book to bring these peoples back into the modern story and, by default, the Ottoman context.

RECAPPING THE STORY

As studies of other cases have shown, to return the voice of the "colonized" often shut out of official documentation by frustrated

bureaucrats, one must recognize that a large part of the world was in a process of intellectual appropriation as much as economic or political turmoil. The French-speaking intelligentsia in Bucharest, Cairo, Athens, Belgrade, Sarajevo, Beirut, Aleppo, and Istanbul all represent an important cultural and historical force in the late Ottoman Empire (Hanioğlu 1985; Hanssen 2005; Khalidi 1997; Watenpaugh 2006). Some Ottoman intellectuals brought with them bourgeois sensibilities that mimicked what European elite were producing in respect to their own representations of the uneducated masses, the universal ambitions of "men," and the aesthetic of the modern. The romanticism of German nationalist scholarship and French positivism, for instance, clearly influenced the writing of such prominent Balkan thinkers. Whether it was the much celebrated southern Albanian (Tosk) Sami Frashëri or his southern Slav counterparts, Ivan Mažuranić, Franc Miklošić, Vuk Karadžić, Ljudevit Gaj, or even Njegoš, the constant struggle between chauvinistic elitism and the drive to mobilize the masses on principles of shared identities and interests shaped the internal dynamics of Balkan societies throughout the second half of the nineteenth century (Šufflay 1925). It is this struggle that has largely survived the modern transition. What has been left out is the very substance of these people's experience, the Ottoman.

Unfortunately, historians have misinterpreted the ideologically obscure transactions between "victim" and "instrument" of modern identity politics because the criteria for acknowledging what constituted a historical force have been established by the paradigm of the nation-state. It is within this context of the modern state that the very same powerful, wealthy, or articulate post-Ottoman agents have since refused to allow for the kind of epistemic or ideological ambiguity the refugees, brutalized, pillaged, murdered, and ultimately subjugated, surely experienced. As a result, the current nationalist historiography in the Balkans consciously reinforces a myth of sociocultural cohesion that was really formed only in the period after the 1912–1913 wars, not before them. As we can see from the photos used on the cover of this book, the consequences are clear.

The systematic exclusion of entire regions and their communities' contribution to the production of the past is a quintessential act of modernity. It constitutes a gap between experience and the fluid demands of "order" in a rhetorical space that we increasingly are expected to believe is the absolute truth. Such disparities between experience and post-Ottoman narrative formula constitute a clash of perspectives that has distorted the complex dynamics leading up to

and following World War I, a tension that until now has silenced a majority of history's actors.[2]

Reinstating the Ottomans specifically argues for a new approach to the pre–World War I Balkans to avoid exclusively analyzing the actions of men and women in the region through the prism of an ethnonationalism or sectarianism largely assumed by analysts today. Part of the problem with writing this study has been extricating meaning from events without reaffirming our conventional understanding of modern politics, diplomacy, and social development. In the hands of historians focusing on a uniquely "Western" history, the story of historical processes leading up to the modern state is geopolitically fixed. In the basest form, widely studied and cited historical accounts unquestioningly identify Europe as the central driving force in the modern era. This account relies in particular on a reading of economic transformation as the primary engine of change and the nation-state as the only logical result. In other words, the expansion of European-based empires that commandeered much of the known world in the twentieth century can really be appreciated only with the recognition of European economic hegemony and the imposition of the European state model on the rest of the world (Mitchell 2002: 1–15, 80–119, 153–178, 209–303).

One example of how this impacted the regions under study is the imposition of new forms of social and political organization—the nation-state—that became the clumsy alternative to earlier forms of social, economic, and political exchange. Unfortunately, the arbitrariness of this process and the fundamentally perverted manner in which ethnonationalism became part of the social and political fabric of the western Balkans has rarely been studied by historians outside the lexicon imposed by the twentieth-century state. Consequently, there are profound distortions of how we associate events and label the principal actors. This results in our missing a possible angle to understanding why, for instance, British activists who advocated for Bulgarian national sovereignty suddenly found a receptive audience among those they championed as Bulgarians (Gladstone 1876). Upon imposing a state predicated on a narrowly defined "Bulgarian" identity claims exclusively, the narrative of how the Ottoman Empire (and the cultural heterogeneity that accompanied it) fits into the story is forever distorted (Todorova 1997).

Another methodological problem is the tendency to reduce the historical forces ultimately at play to the programs and collective politics of the Great Powers that assumed that the participants were entirely loyal to their agenda. In other words, instead of adopting

sociological models of analysis that evoke "identity" as the animating factor, exploring the political economy of the entire region better helps put events into context. As suggested throughout, when urban-based liberals in Istanbul, Belgrade, Sofia, Salonika, Prizren, or Sarajevo reached out to become politically relevant in their diverse regions, the often exaggerated claims proved impossible to realize on the ground.

The historians who have studied the push after the revolts of 1848 in other parts of Europe to harness the capacities of the modern state for the benefit of various capitalist interests noted that the biggest impediment to integrating regional economies had been the peasants and the urban poor (Stojančević 1968; Tilly 1990: 171–181). Cognizant of their immediate and short-term interests, the rural and urban "subaltern" of the Balkans, much like their counterparts in central and western Europe, were fully prepared to struggle for their parochial, individual needs via labor activism, banditry, smuggling, and insurrection. This direct activism confused and ultimately transformed ambitions and imperial policies, hence the various "borderland" experiences studied in this book, from Ali Pasha's Ionian Islands, the Frashëri brothers' Epirus, Pashko Vasa's *Malësi,* to Boletini's Mitrovica.

In addition to highlighting the incongruent components to the ethnonationalist paradigms dominating the historiography, it has been suggested throughout this book that the story of the western Balkans up until 1908 should be read as one very much parallel to those experienced in other parts of Europe and the wider world facing economic and political upheaval. This book, in other words, is an open invitation for others to expand the analysis of the period to highlight the diversity of modern history. Making this methodological concession would assist us in integrating the kind of innovative analytical tools that helped undermine long-standing assumptions about the uniqueness of European knowledge and the origins of the modern state.

Much as with other postcolonial scholarship, the attempt at a revisionist investigation made here did not seek ethnographic "essences" that might reappear over and over again in the form of primordial ethnic and religious tensions. Rather, by understanding the world through a "differential analysis of the modalities of discourse" and human actions, I have argued that we can shift the perspective from an emphasis on the continuity of, say ancient hatreds, to disconnectedness, mobility, and dynamism (Foucault 1972: 139).[3] Put differently, hungry peasants were not simply being manipulated to service

the interests of the powerful or driven by primordial needs. Instead, they shaped the modern history of the western Balkans through multiple exchanges that took place at the conceptual as well as operational levels of state expansion today associated with modernity.

More important, these interchanges between state and society, the rich and the poor, the learned and the illiterate, were not uniform; the variation in experiences at all levels of the society resists any one ideological or institutional framework. This contested, dynamic exchange between interests constitutes the ultimate force of change. Moreover, these inevitable varieties of experience are the foundations to our challenge of the nationalist paradigm; they at once challenge the accuracy of sweeping generalizations that usually accompany a nationalist framework as well as suggest that something other than modern ethnonational identities animated and informed people's actions prior to the creation of post-Ottoman states.

The transactions studied throughout reconstituted local political identities as well as opened up opportunities for action. The economic and military violence that was thrust on so many western Balkan inhabitants after 1875 induced indigenous villagers to adopt brigandage while, at the same time, openly soliciting the help of outside benefactors. Roaming the wooded hills of the Balkans, the legendary *çeta* groups who filled the salacious travelogues titillating western European audiences at the time won a reputation for being ruthless bandits, *eşkıya* (in Ottoman), *hajduci, četnici, komitadžii* (in Slavic languages), or *antartes* (in Greek).[4] At the same time, however, these "common criminals" became the darlings of the media in Europe and within Ottoman elite circles. The intrepid ventured out to the dark corners of the Balkans looking for these primordial peoples that "time forgot," sending back rumors of vampires and noble tribal savages who could, at the same time, prove useful for other purposes.[5] Depending on the editorial leanings of the publisher, these men and, sometimes, women were either heroic patriots fighting for presupposed nationalist dreams thwarted by the evil "Muslim Turks" or the source of nervous admiration.[6]

Instead of using a sweeping, admittedly convenient, assertion that the peoples in one area had some underlying essence connecting them to people beyond their obvious locale, the studies of the Balkans' past need to avoid the aggregation of peoples' ambitions, immediate concerns, and motivations to fit a modern state-building agenda that has meaning only from the late nineteenth century onward. In face of persistent reductionism, therefore, the corrective process is to rewrite a place for the local agent in late Ottoman Balkan history, a process

that begins with remembering that the ability to "imagine," as well as to forget, what constitutes the origins of the "nation" is an entirely modern phenomenon (Chatterjee 1993).

How writers represented the groups of men roaming the hills and what such "rebels" actually had in mind were often two entirely different things. In this context of shifting analytical categories and mythmaking, a new range of opportunities to act seemed to embolden more men to "take to the hills" after 1878 (Scott 2010). These once poorly armed groups were finding by the turn of the century ample financial and material backing from political agents eager to demonstrate their "nationalist" sincerity by founding "liberation" movements. The options available to these rebels only increased over the course of the 1900–1908 period as more and more of the bourgeoisie in Istanbul, Paris, London, and Vienna came to admire the physical and cultural idiosyncrasies of the western Balkans (Adanır 1996: 125–143).

Countless informal players in the new international order quickly learned that saying the right thing to the right people resulted in gaining access to resources that had once been inaccessible to the people of rural Manastir, Yanya, Işkodra, Salonika, and Kosova.[7] The apparent endless violence that became synonymous with the region affected the lives of everyone while it undermined the ability of the Ottoman Empire to keep foreigners out of its internal affairs. However, the same bandits and rebels were responsible for defending their home regions from the machinations of these same foreign interests. As such, the multiple agendas of these local actors added more than one ironic twist to a Balkan story that had seemingly written itself in Western newspapers and modern history books.[8]

Recognizing that the conventions of Balkan historiography constitute a serious impediment to pushing deeper into the contours of such transitional periods, the end of the Ottoman Empire needs some qualification. To make it clear why we can benefit from infusing our investigations with the critical scholarship of other disciplines, I have looked at some of the very instruments, institutions, and associational practices that theorists of nationalism assume are key indicators of early ethnonational development in the Balkans. In Chapter 4, for instance, I explored how the delineation of frontiers drawn on a map does not necessarily help define social, economic, and political realities in ethnonational terms. Rather, as illustrated by the newly imposed frontiers between Montenegro, Serbia, and what remained of Ottoman territory, the process exploded into various localized conflicts that ultimately confused the nature of state authority in these

borderlands. Indeed, because of the unexpected sophistication of the highland peoples through whose lands the new frontiers would run, much of the political and economic development of the region would prove to be ill defined and to shift frequently.

Not only did the imposition of international frontiers fail to assist Serbia, Montenegro, or the Ottoman Empire in imposing a civic or ethnonational identity on the region's population, but the nature of the interaction between locals and the outside world also transformed how neighboring states interacted. Indeed, over time, the kinds of opportunities this presented to the Slavic and Hellenic political elite as well as to numerous local community leaders actually confused the political process of dealing with the so-called Eastern Question. As seen throughout, the international community may have wanted to impose new commercially identifiable zones of exchange with enforceable customs' regimes along international frontiers as well as to compel the Ottoman state to start repaying the ruinous debt it had accumulated over the previous 30 years. Unfortunately for these international interests, local activities ultimately undermined these plans.

As much as ethnicity, religion, and social status cannot fully help us to delineate the actors in the highly contentious border dispute after the Berlin Congress of 1878, so too do the associations we make today between religious and regional identity prove unhelpful in the Ottoman Balkans. Our rereading of sectarianism and the persistent use of the notion of tribalism, soundly criticized by anthropologists, has served the purpose of undermining the study of the late Ottoman period. Widely viewed as the racist by-product of British and French imperial social sciences in the nineteenth century, the use of "tribal" metaphors to describe the actions of some peoples in the Balkans (and more generally, the Islamic world) has nevertheless continued well beyond the Ottoman period. This perpetual use of metaphors of "backwardness" and "primitivism" was shown in Chapter 2 to be especially important to the way in which some Ottoman intellectuals couched their formulas for state reform and thereby influenced the way in which post-Ottoman scholars have persisted in using outdated categories of analysis. That does not mean elitist tropes can thus dictate how we analyze local events.

Language, too, has been a preferred method of analytical differentiation that has remained sadly stagnant in Balkan and Ottoman studies. As has been well documented by theorists of nationalism such as Benedict Anderson, the role of language in the determination of, first, nationality and, then, race was a subject of considerable debate and research in the early nineteenth century (Anderson

1983: 71). The need to consolidate human history into a matrix of collective identities in the context of an emerging modern state was ensured through the study of languages initiated by the romantic German philosopher Johann Herder, who introduced the idea that a shared language joined communities of the past to those of the present (Lorcin 1999: 40–52). That being said, it would be a mistake to rely too heavily on the ethnolinguistic categories frequently used in Balkan historiography, for these "Serbian-speaking," "Albanian-speaking," and "Greek-speaking" communities have proved too diverse and complex to be reducible to simple ethnonational parts of the larger whole (Tatsios 1984).

Another way of making this methodological point is to explain the importance of avoiding easy classifications of those who are engaged in complicated events. The fact that people in fluid political and economic situations react in ways that immediately shift their social as well as political boundaries militates against relying on general categories of analysis to tell the story of modernity. We can thus abandon classifications such as tribe, class, sect, ethnicity, and nation, the scholarly tools that conceptually separate people rather than recognizing that historical actors navigate their changing world in various complicated, often contradictory strategies.

In the past, the sudden outburst of local violence in much of the nineteenth century was seen as an important force in modern Balkan and larger Ottoman history because of their assumed connection to a process identified as the "awakening" of national ambitions. Instead of acknowledging that the context includes matters that remained outside the framework imposed by post-Ottoman nationalist historiography, bloodletting in places such as Macedonia is incessantly co-opted by competing nationalist narratives in Greece, Albania, Bulgaria, Serbia, Turkey, and Macedonia. In this book, I offered other possible tools for reading the late Ottoman period that avoid collating motivations around collective identities artificially transcending regional distinctions.

Many of those who would find themselves at the center of government efforts to expand authority in the Balkans inevitably had conflicting loyalties. Many vied for lucrative government positions as a well-documented means of expanding their networks of influence beyond their immediate family, village, or region. The time-honored tradition of patronage seemed to play itself out in the *Tanzimat* and Hamidian eras with men such as Zef Jubani, Pashko Vasa, and Ibrahim Temo co-opting official policies to help ensure that their sons, cousins, or allies were strategically placed within the growing bureaucracy in ways that strengthened local power interests. Such

interweaving links need to be investigated further to better appreciate how policies in Istanbul translated quite differently in the home districts of many of the most influential proponents of reform in the late *Tanzimat* period. This issue is particularly relevant to the forms of violence in the Balkans that are often assumed to originate from nationalist movements. As deeper research and skepticism was introduced, however, there were other issues to settle.

Both the Ottoman officials and their Austro-Hungarian counterparts often showed frustration over the ruthless exploitation of different economic and social situations by the authorities and activists in neighboring states (Hubka 1910). The Austrian consul in Manastir, for example, noted that by 1901 fragile governments in Serbia, Greece, and Bulgaria were fighting proxy wars of influence in the province's villages by securing the services of bandits for hire such as Debreli Islam Ibrahim Garanati. In the past these agents of change had a limited role in the historiography, largely dictated by their association with the historic events in the national story. In actuality, Debreli Islam and his many contemporaries had a far more complicated relationship with the region, the people living in it, and those shelling out money to "manipulate" them.[9] Such local activities, which have long been seen as part of a reprehensible protection racket (*deruhdecilik* in Ottoman), can be interpreted in other ways that do not emanate from the perspective of the state.[10]

I noted this already in the introduction but need to restate my claim here by revisiting the events in Macedonia at the turn of the century. The cause for which well-armed mixed *çeta* groups during the crucial 1903–1908 period were fighting, which has long been mistakenly attributed to "ancient" ethnic hatreds or a natural predilection to violence among backward Balkan peoples, was mostly predicated on securing a safe home for their family and community members. The events taking place in the late Ottoman Balkans were actually part of a productive exchange, no matter how contrived the nationalist tropes by a self-appointed intellectual vanguard rhetorically co-opting historical events in places such as Manastir may be. In fact, when the two contradictory states of social, economic, and political existence met, for example, when Bulgarian, Greek, or Serbian state agents paid Christian peasants to fire guns at their Muslim neighbors, a sort of productive "friction" took place that ultimately constituted the historical force studied in this book.[11]

Demonstrating that people in the Balkans before the fall of the Ottoman Empire had confused "hybrid" identities, however, does not fully address the range of concerns in this study. Challenging

nationalist myths is one thing. Adopting an understanding of the events throughout the last 50 years of the Ottoman Empire outside the paradigm of ethnonationalism requires an altogether more complex method of reading the past. To maneuver around the rigid stereotypes that equate Ottomans to Turks and state boundaries to ethnically pure territories and to see religions as monolithic and a person's political, social, and cultural identity as fixed, we need to again return to those *çeta* roaming the hills of Macedonia.

The *çeta* groups and the communities who fed them were facing a truly dire situation by the summer of 1908, a situation that had little to do with the nationalist agendas formulated elsewhere. Not only were drought and predatory capitalism undermining the means of survival, locals were also subjected to the "new world order" being imposed on lands that had only recently been ceded to newly created nation-states. Lost today in the national historiographies that glorify the moment of "liberation" from "the Turks" are the acts of violence perpetrated against anyone who did not fit the new formula of cultural uniformity hammered out by intellectual and economic elites. Muslims, Catholics, Turks, Albanians, Bulgarians, and Greeks from previously mixed areas now found inside newly created Serbia, Montenegro, or Greece instantaneously became the undesirable legacies of an Ottoman era where religion and language had a different meaning. Those *çeta* who took to the hills in the early twentieth century saw what had happened to others who had suddenly found themselves expendable in newly "liberated" lands. Having learned the lesson, these *çeta* groups demonstrated that they would fight to stop modern "progress" from devastating their lives.

It is clear from reading the correspondence between the communities in the region and Ottoman and Austrian officials that the rumors circulating of secret plans by Russia, Serbia, and Greece to divide the Ottoman Balkans spurred people to action. Considerable interaction between Ottoman officials and their Austrian and Italian counterparts reveal this dynamism within the polyglot communities that openly supported the "rebel groups" circulating in the wooded hills of Manastir. Far from wanting segregation, these people resented church officials sent from neighboring countries to try to divide their villages along sectarian lines. Italian observers, in particular, were impressed by the cooperation Muslims and Christians demonstrated when resisting such outsider provocations.[12]

Peasants in the western Balkans were not the only ones aware of the dangers that lurked behind the closed doors of European diplomacy, the fiery sermons of foreign priests, and Ottoman state

tyranny. Many among the empire's newly educated elite had since the late 1880s organized secret committees (both in a diaspora spread throughout Europe and internally) to address the empire's problems. Although by no means the only groups, the Committee of Union and Progress and its offshoot, the Committee of Progress and Union (CUP and CPU, respectively), proved to be the most influential, well connected, and adaptive of the Ottoman opposition groups operating in the Balkans. Initially reacting to the forces transforming their society, such groups became forces of change in the early twentieth century in their own right.

By the summer of 1908, the CUP/CPU had effectively infiltrated the Ottoman Third Army, published newspapers that circulated clandestinely in most of the imperial realm, and demonstrated a readiness to stage dramatic coordinated attacks on key state assets to create the change that many in the Balkans desired. As most history books dealing with the 1908 events agree, these actions initiated a series of local reactions that quickly dragged the entire European continent into a period of uncertainty and confusion. The problem with the historiography is that it has misread the motivating factors behind the "Young Turk" revolt of 1908 and, as a result, failed to fully appreciate why so much of the Balkans supported the new Ottoman government that emerged later in 1908.[13]

After a nearly bloodless coup that led Sultan Abdülhamid II to reinstate an extraordinarily liberal constitution that he had originally rescinded 30 years earlier, news almost immediately spread throughout the troubled empire that a new order was possible. Faced with the threat of yet more wars against expansionist European powers and their surrogates, it seemed as if the massive celebrations in many of the towns and cities of the Ottoman Empire expressed a universal sigh of relief. Institutional reform and universally applied principles of justice were on the way.

The celebrations in the streets of Salonika, Istanbul, and Manastir were not simply formal exercises. The huge crowds waving banners declaring freedom (*hürriyet*), union (*ittihat*), and progress (*terakki*) were sincere expressions of collective relief that, just perhaps, these Young Turks could save the society in which they all might coexist. The words "unity" and "the Constitution" crossed many people's lips in those heady days. More than anything, the images of so many of the empire's diverse peoples manifesting their support for a new constitutional order affirms that people as seemingly parochial as *Malësorë* actually believed that the new government would help defend the heterogeneous Ottoman state. Rather than being brave

"mountain savages" known as uncontrollable rebels who championed their own independence, these men invested their future on principles of cohabitation and cultural heterogeneity.

This appreciation for what animated the peoples of the Ottoman Balkans to stand massively behind the new regime, often leading to bloody confrontations between neighbors or (in the case of Kosova-based supporters of the CUP) fellow *Shqiptarë* who remained loyal to the sultan, is what ultimately drives this corrective study of the nationalist paradigm in the Balkans. Ethnicity and religion were not the driving forces that scholars have made them out to be.[14]

Today, there no longer exists a politically important Boletini or Curri clan. The descendants of Hasan Prishtina no longer influence the affairs of Kosovars. Likewise, Ismail Qemali's descendents and even the Frashëris have been all but erased from the Balkans. Their disappearance speaks of a terrifying, brutal, and dramatic postimperial period in which the influential and the powerful were the first targeted by new regimes of state centralization. As a consequence of such violence directed at them, their ability to navigate the currents of the time proved no longer useful in face of the political forces that needed to subjugate autonomous sources of patronage to which state subjects could declare their loyalty. The post-Ottoman world became a terrifying distortion where families and their attached communities, who once navigated decades of foreign occupation, open warfare, and untold demographic shifts, either disappeared or faded into the homogeneity required by the new channels of modern state power.

Using a wide variety of source material, this book has left no room for a monolithic version of nationalism that is espoused by political and economic elites in the Balkans today. What we found through a critical inspection of a wide range of primary sources is that, as with most political systems, the nature of Ottoman rule over the 1800–1912 period involved a constant negotiation of power through local channels and associations that shaped daily life. Such negotiations sometimes took the form of exchanges across the battlefield, such as the struggle in the highlands between Slavs, Ottoman soldiers, and local *Malësorë*. More often, Ottoman and local power was modified and transferred in offices, around tables, and in newspapers and telegrams. A multiplicity of actors were released to follow either landed, educated elites or warriors shooting Ottoman troops at various times during the period. It is these varied participants in the daily affairs of governance and commerce in the Balkans who prove to have struck the momentary bargains that only on rare occasions make political

life; they were also the crucial components producing post-Ottoman, modern European states.

In the end, the Ottoman state failed to harness, unite, and redirect the energies of the diverse peoples of Kosova, Işkodra, Manastir, and Yanya to confront the emerging neighboring states that were harnessing the potential of their citizens via the army, the police, and schools. The period covered in this book is a testament to a complex cross-section of societies and communities whose diverse and conflicting interests never could be streamlined for the purpose of the modern state. Indeed, for those looking for a link to our present issues, Kosova today is a testament to the failure of both the Ottoman and the Serbian/Yugoslav state to subjugate the region's inhabitants. Kosovars today still associate political interests by way of clan, family, and regional affiliations, a matrix of loyalties that even the full force of the modern Serbian/Yugoslav state, let alone NATO–UN or an EU-guided "independent" state, could ever suppress. Like Kosova's resilient parochialism today, the world described in this book serves as a window into what the Ottomans faced in the western Balkans as well as the issues confronting the state-building projects of all the post-Ottoman countries in the twentieth century.

My argument, hard to swallow for anyone loyal to his or her ethnonational identity today, is not a simple academic exercise meant to scandalize or challenge old conventions. Rather, it attempts to reanimate a collective consciousness that for many decades has succumbed to passively engaging with the world around us. Albanians and their neighbors—Slavs, Turks, Greeks, Roma, and Bulgarians—have been manipulated for years by the way in which their histories have been written. Most are wrongly convinced that the elite groups from the southern regions of the known Albanian world were the patriarchal guardians of an Albanian nation in waiting. Moreover, self-identified Albanians today have been coaxed into believing that others were responsible for their tragic fate, a fate that has led to carving up "the nation" by territorial frontiers and creating five separate clusters of Albanians all living with minority political status. More problematic still, as a result of this passive thinking, Albanians have been convinced that they must trust others, be they the British, Americans, Tito, or Stalin, to eventually help them realize their still inarticulate and poorly informed dreams as a post-1912 people. For the western Balkans as a whole to ever fully recover from the impact of modernity, this needs to change.

Notes

Introduction: The Search for a Narrative of Transition

1. Keith Brown (2003) offers a helpful corrective study to this history.
2. With respect to Mihal Grameno, Skendi's outdated work (1967: 210–214) relies on problematic sources that inevitably come to certain conclusions about his motivations over the summer of 1908. One of the more questionable sources is the purported memoirs of Mihal Grameno (1959), published many years after his death by the fiercely revisionist regime of the Albanian dictator Enver Hoxha.
3. Many post-Ottoman states faced considerable difficulties with imposing new ethnonational criteria to their citizenship regime, largely because large pockets of still polyglot and heterogeneous communities violently resisted state efforts to impose a singular ethnonational "identity" on them. Of the more interesting cases of former Ottoman subjects "navigating" nationality, the Republic of Turkey (Gingeras 2009), Bulgaria (Dragostinova 2009), and Greece (Hirschon 1989) stand out. For a theoretical explanation of this decidedly "modern" practice, see Brubaker (1996).
4. Mignolo (2000) suggests how to effectively realize this reorientation of our focus.
5. Unlike most academics, writers such as Leo Tolstoy treat history as a multileveled complex of human emotions, possibilities, and structures. As demonstrated by Morson's insightful reading of Tolstoy's strategies to deal with time and perspective in "historical" events (1996: 155–162, 271–272), the creative writer has often proven that it is possible to master the complexities of representing the passage of time and thus shine an uncomplimentary light on the narrative methods used by many historians and social scientists.
6. Many prefer to evoke the "decline narrative" to explain periods of violence and subsequent transformations in the Balkans. This method of explaining the rise of nationalism as a natural progression in face of Ottoman decline is especially popular in Europe (Hitzel 2002; Mantran 2003; Ternon 2005), despite considerable revisionist work done in Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States.
7. Ramet (2005: 200–219) offers an excellent critique of the literature emerging out of the 1990s crisis in the Balkans that emphasized this frame of analysis.
8. This tragic juxtaposition of worldviews has already been explored in similarly heterodox Ottoman societies such as Lebanon (Makdisi 2000: 1–14, 28–50) and Yemen (Blumi 2010b).

9. Attempts to identify parallel and, some would say, conflicting fields of consciousness for nineteenth-century Ottoman "Greeks" or nomadic peoples in Anatolia have addressed some of the questions raised here (Kasaba 1999, 2009).
10. The use of the Ottoman Empire has flourished in the past 30 years in order to make a larger theoretical point about modern states (Anderson 1974: 360–394; Sohrabi 2005).
11. Gawrych (2006: 22–26) offers details in how specific Albanian regional categories such as *Gegë* and *Toskë* were used at the Ottoman bureaucratic level. French scholar Nathalie Clayer (2006: 59–150) goes further to assert that the regional configurations that distinguish northern *Gegë* from southern *Toskë* should be the medium through which we understand the variable nature of Albanian nationalism as it emerges in the late nineteenth century.
12. From this point forward, in order to make a methodological point, I substitute the English "Albanians" with the Ottoman Turkish and Albanian *Arnavutlar/Shqiptarë,* and when appropriate the region-specific terms of *Toskë/Gegë* to identify groups as they were likely identified at the time.
13. Norris's study (1993: 43–81) offers the best description of the opportunities that the Ottomans provided for talented *Toskë* exposed to the empire's multicultural radiance.
14. Another important way of distinguishing *Toskë* was the proximity each subgroup lived to other multidimensional communities, the trade routes they operated through or the level of integration into the Ottoman state their members enjoyed (Wassa Effendi 1879b: 76).
15. For a comprehensive survey of the cultural vibrancy in *Toskalık/Toskëni* as well as an invaluable history of Sufism in the region, see Clayer (2006: 45–58, 104–131).
16. Scholars of the Eastern Mediterranean in the nineteenth century have long identified an *effendiyya* phenomenon directly linked to capitalist developments I suggest begin to take place only after the 1830s. The *effendiyya* would include students, teachers, lawyers, journalists, and the lower and middle-level government functionaries who fused their immediate needs as a self-identified class and their disparate associations with their homelands in the western Balkans. For some definitions of the *effendiyya* as they were seen as primary actors in Egypt, see Benin and Lockman (1987: 10).
17. For discussions on stereotypes of certain groups in the western Balkans throughout late Ottoman media, consult Brummett (2000) and Heinzelmann (1995: 134–139).
18. As with the Albanian terms, the Slavic-speaking communities in the same mountainous region differentiated according to which *bratstvo* or exogamous group clusters of families belonged. More is made of these important regional divisions among Slavic groups when discussing the creation of an independent Montenegro in chapters 4 and 5 (Durham 1909: 88–89).
19. Detailed descriptions of the regions and the communities may be found in Ymeri (2004).
20. This is important, as most scholars today still resort to using the notion of "tribes" or "nations" to represent the nature of intercommunal relations in a non-European setting (Blumi 2005: 43–56).

21. Among the more important studies by Austro-German regional experts are Theodor Ippen (1892, 1907), Nopcsa (1907, 1910), and (Jokl 1923).
22. Pasi further distinguishes the region by identifying under the rubric of the lesser mountains (Malcija e Vogel) the "tribes" of Shala, Shoshi, Toplana, Kiri, Plani, and Gjani (Cordignano 1933: 126).

1 Retrieving Historical Processes: Transitions to a Modern Story

1. A debate rages between the Kosovar Rexhep Qosja and a number of other prominent Albanians, including Ismail Kadare, over Albania's place in the world (Ceka 2006; Sulstarova 2006). To the latter group, the only way for Albanians to be recognized as "Western" is to abandon the religion that "Turks" imposed on them, an argument Qosja finds antithetical to all what modern "Europe" is supposed to stand for (Brisku 2006; Çabej 1994; Kaser 2002: 30–36; Puto 2006).
2. In the Balkan context, Malcolm (1998: 28–40) offers a useful discussion on the use and misuse of claims to ancient history by modern peoples.
3. Prior to the nineteenth century, the term referred to an officially recognized religious community; after 1800, *millet* became increasingly used as a modern equivalent of "ethnicity."
4. In one example of the misappropriation of the term, Clayer rightly notes (2006: 277–284) that post-Ottoman scholars misread Sami Frashëri's use of "*millet*" as a marker of "ethnonational" identity (i.e., Albanian or Turk), when in fact, he was using it in a much broader, premodern sense of religious community. Contrary to what hopeful Albanian or Turkish nationalist historians claim, Sami evoked the Muslim "*millet*" not the Albanian or post-Ottoman Turk.
5. As noted by anthropologist Richard Jenkins (1997: 13–14), "Ethnicity is no more fixed or unchanging than the culture of which it is a component or the situations in which it is produced and reproduced." See also Cooper (2005: 59–90).
6. The *ayanlık* has long been the topic of discussion in Balkan studies (Adanır 2006; Zens 2002).
7. They were, after all, engaged in a local struggle that had pitted the city-state of Kotor against Dubrovnik, while the Venetians consolidated their hold of the Albanian coast. This all took place in the context of a rebellious prince Vojislav Vojinović creating alliances as a result of the breaking up of the Nemanjići dynasty, instigated by Hungary's King Louis I and Ottoman Sultan Murad I's invasions of the Balkans (Jens-Schmitt 2001; Živković 1989: 1: 255).
8. This logic became central to the ambitions of nineteenth-century intellectuals and the European industrialists who patronized them, an instrumentalist link that deserves deeper study, not the blind appropriation we find today (Kitromilides 1994: 185).
9. It is acknowledged, for instance, that King Dušan relied almost entirely on Albanian-speaking troops with whom the newly crowned king conquered much of the land south of Kosovo to the Gulf of Corinth (Malcolm 1998: 48).

10. While this concern with our uncritical use of modern ethnonational terms to speak of medieval kingdoms is not explored further here, another study of Kosovo's long history has raised some of these questions in less direct ways. Malcolm (1998: 55–57) studied some known medieval sources of the region and discusses the problems with drawing conclusions on which ethnic group lived where based on monastic estate records.
11. The concept of *aman* in Islamic law demands that Muslims guarantee the safety of both people and property when a community peaceably surrenders during battle. As for "the people of the book" (i.e., Christians and Jews), under Islamic law the *ahl al-kitâb* are protected as subjects of the Muslim ruler. They are guaranteed rights of worship and certain privileges determined by their respective religious leadership, known as *dhimmi*. At the heart of the policy to preserve the communities absorbed by newly created Muslim states, Christians and Jews were not obliged to serve in military campaigns in return for a head-tax or *jizya*, charged at various rates, which almost certainly meant paying fewer taxes to Muslims than were previously charged by their former Christian leaders (Esposito 1998: 36–41).
12. The process is usually characterized as "Serbian–Turkish osmosis," a phrase reflecting the uncritical use of modern ethnographic and ethnonational terms that confuse medieval processes with modern terminology linked to identity (Malcolm 1998: 86). Halil Inalcık (1993: 67–108) identifies the early Ottoman integration of the Balkans as a product of a kind of cultural and political fusion as well.
13. The secondary literature written by regional historians paints a picture in which "Muslim Turks" subjugate the local Christian population for more than 500 years in ways that constitute a program of ethnic and cultural annihilation (Emmert 1990: 2–14).
14. One scholar suggests that the forced confiscation of church lands was rare during this period. For instance, Ohrid, one of the most important Christian centres in the Balkans at the time, had only two churches converted during the entire 600 years of the Ottoman era, despite the symbolic importance of the history (Kiel 1985: 168).
15. This discussion of voluntary conversion is taboo in all the Balkan countries today, with numerous attempts in the scholarship and literature to either suggest that the process was entirely imposed on native peoples or simply ignore it (Minkov 2004: 6–9; Zeyazkova 2002). Humphreys (1991: 274–283) provides a useful discussion of the primary issues facing scholars studying conversion.
16. As we shall see with the case of Ali Pasha of Tepedelen/Tepelena and a number of the Ottoman Empire's bureaucratic elite, associations with various Sufi orders provided the networking needed to sustain and expand influence.
17. England, Portugal, Holland, Russia, and Spain developed alternative sources for the lucrative spice and raw materials long passing through the Ottoman and Venetian empires. As a result, domestic tensions arose as locals sought various opportunities outside local ones monopolized by the Ottoman state (Casale 2007; Dale 2002).
18. Ali Pasha's oldest son Ahmet Muhtar Pasha proved an especially trustworthy soldier and was awarded the governorship of the *sancak* of Ohri (Ohrid)

in 1796. Interestingly, the appointment upset Ali Pasha enough that he actually lobbied against his son's promotion, leading to the position being given to one of his allies, Ohrid native Ahmet Pashazade Mehmet Pasha (Cevdet 1309: 243–244). After years of serving throughout the Balkans for the Sultan, in late 1816 Ahmet Muhtar Pasha was appointed the office of *mutasarrif* in the *sancak* of Avlonya/Vlora located north of his father's main area of control until being replaced by his younger brother, Salih Pasha, in June 1818 (Sezer 1995: 175).

19. In 1805, for instance, Ibrahim Pasha of Vlora (Avlonya) reported to the Porte that Russians offered him 25 *guruş* a month for his help in recruiting locals to serve under the Russians. BBA, HAT, 175/7610 (August 15, 1805); see also Şakul (2009: 267).
20. Besides Ali Pasha and Mehmet Ali of Kavala, the cases of first Karadjordjović and then Obrenović machinations in the Belgrade *sancak*, the ascendant Petrovići-Njegoši in Karadağ/Montenegro/Črna Gora, Rhigas Velestinlis in Morea, and Osman Paşvanoğlu in Vidin all shaped the western Balkans and the new range of possibilities available to locals and external powers alike (Novaković 1954; Raça 1990).
21. France annexed Venetian territories in the Adriatic with the Treaty of Campo Formio (October 17, 1797). This treaty forced the Ottomans to reconsider the nature of their alliances with locals. For as much as the Ottomans tried to avoid the larger European conflict, it was now thrust in the middle of it by the very fact that Napoleon was formally a neighboring power. As seen in respect to Egypt later, Napoleon's surrogates had developed a reputation of aggressively expanding their spheres of influence at the expense of local authorities. Eager for lucrative assets, the occupation of Corfu and other Ionian islands posed an immediate threat to the Ottoman Morean/Epirus mainland, which was rich in commodities and vital for the provisioning of French troops and the inevitable arrival of the French navy. For evidence of an official response to these developments, see BBA, HAT, 168/7123, Governor of Morea reports to Sublime Porte (1797–1798).
22. Ali Pasha provided firewood, local spirits, salt, wheat, olive oil, and other necessities (McKnight 1965: 32–35). For copies of the treaties, see Ahmed Cevdet (1309: 7, 304–311).
23. BBA, Cevdet Maliye, 22780 (May 5, 1804).
24. The Ottoman state ordered Ali Pasha to lend money to General Chabot, commander of the French troops in Corfu. This loan was to be used to pay for supplies that Ali Pasha was able to provide. In many ways, this is equivalent to subsidizing Ali Pasha while protecting the Ottoman state diplomatically (Şakul 2009: 255).
25. Albanian historians claim Ali Pasha as a national hero, and he is remembered in Greek historiography for his positive treatment of his Rum Orthodox and Jewish subjects. It is under him that Greek culture thrived as his capital Yanya/Janina became the education hub for future Greeks prior to the creation of a kingdom (Fleming 1999: 64–65). In this context, he created through the use of demotic Greek as an administrative language a crucial legacy often obscured today in our rigid calculus of nationalist history.

26. The benefits of Ottoman suzerainty were numerous at the time: Considerable trade advantages existed for those linked to the new Ionian Republic, for instance, which meant that those carrying Ionian papers could travel and trade in the empire's major port cities unhindered by associations with on-again, off-again political relations. Many other minor European states were encouraged in a similar fashion to conduct trade under individual arrangements, thus taking from Russians the power to exclusively represent them (Beydilli 1991). Such a moment in the history of the eastern Mediterranean speaks to quite a different trajectory if not subsumed under liberal capitalism later in the century.
27. See Skoulidas (2002: 172–181) for an understanding of how an independent Greek state began to reinterpret this collaborative history increasingly in terms informed by notions of an exclusive ethnonational identity.
28. Some scholars have argued that "westernization" that followed these kinds of patterns discussed throughout inevitably caused tensions within larger society, tensions that gravitated around rearticulated ethnic traditions and class associations (Göçek 1996: 118–137).
29. Known as the patriotic alliance, Fuad and Ali Pasha dominated the Ottoman government in the 1860s and 1870s, instituting through the selective appointment of like-minded educated bureaucrats a remarkable period of state development and the first real attempt to disseminate a collective Ottoman identity at all levels of the empire (Mardin 2000: 10–80).

2 Repositioning Agency and the Forces of Change

1. The *Tanzimat* has become synonymous with the sudden emergence of assumed nationalist and separatist sentiments among the generic Ottoman elite and the masses. On many levels, this is ironic, for this association at once denies the effectiveness of the *Tanzimat* reforms and asserts that people educated by the Ottoman Empire actively sought its destruction. For a classic example of how the emergence of modern Bulgaria is paradoxically explained as a by-product of Ottoman reforms, see Perry (1993). For an overall analysis of this logic, which has infused Balkan historiography, see Todorova (1996).
2. For detailed explanations of these reforms, one must read the Turkish scholarship, especially Şener (1990), Çadırcı (1997), Çakır (2001), and Bingöl (2004). As Findley notes (1989: 8), the Ottoman Empire's bureaucratic complex was on par with other modern European states even as late as the end of the nineteenth century.
3. Watenpaugh (2006) characterized the fusion of the ideational and epistemological foundations of modernity with a definitive middle-class cultural and political praxis as "middle-class modernity." In so doing, he successfully argued with his study of Aleppo that this region's modernity paralleled the social transformations of Europe and the Americas. I suggest that the same changes take place in the western Balkans.

4. This increasingly integrated milieu indicated a strong, expanded space of commonality of which Benedict Anderson (1983, 2006) wrote. It is certainly the case that the western Balkan *effendiyya* understood their larger world through multiple forms of communication that they established with their counterparts in western and central Europe. My concern is that we do not overemphasize the importance of these exchanges at the expense of the interactions between "subject" and "state" in the western Balkans.
5. The Ottoman-Tosk politician Ismail Qemali observed in his memoirs that the preeminent *Tanzimat*-era reformer Midhat Pasha's early strategy of educational reform set in motion an administrative process in the Balkans that empowered communities and various leaders within them as much as strengthened state influence in the region (Kemal Bey and Story 1920: 56–57).
6. For a comparison of how forces linking German romanticism with imperial ambitions shaped much of central and eastern Europe and the Middle East, see Roshwald (2001: 34–69).
7. While some specialists have increasingly warned their readers not to assume that subjects of the empire had any comparable sense of ethnic consciousness as in post-Ottoman societies, their corrective stops there, missing an opportunity to address this issue to a larger audience (Hanioğlu 2008: 24–26).
8. For details of Ahmed Midhat Pasha's campaign in Niš and its impact on a series of subsequent projects, including Syria and *Arnavutluk,* see Davidson (1963: 145–148). While largely unknown today, this program also invested in the standardization of the Albanian language throughout the 1860–1874 period, a first step toward establishing *Arnavutluk* and *Arnavutlar* as viable intellectual projects that would serve the Ottoman state.
9. It is the period immediately following the Crimea War that inspired consolidation of state control first to thwart foreign financial predators and then raise revenue to pay back foreign debts (Clay 2000; Pamuk 1987).
10. BBA, Irade Dahiliye 23192, Message to newly appointed administrator of Shkodër, Mustafa Pasha, dated 1856, p. 1.
11. The Russians were especially effective with inserting themselves as patrons of Orthodox Slav subjects of the Ottoman Empire. By 1844, many allies of the Romanovs located in *Karadağ*/Montenegro/Črna Gora were given diplomatic immunity through the capitulations, creating a number of headaches for Ottoman officials facing subjects who were suddenly immune from the law. BBA, A.MKT, 188/44, Osman Mazhar reports on two Romanov officers in operation in the region, dated 1849.
12. Also known as Wassa Effendi and/or Vaso Pasha in the documentation.
13. Military expeditions were often a product of such strategies, leaving stubbornly autonomous *Malësorë* constantly facing state violence advocated by southern Tosk officials. For details of one such campaign that originated in Dibër in the height of the winter, see HHStA, PA, XXXVIII, 201, Wassitch to Andrassy, dated Scutari, December 23, 1873.
14. Even well into the Abdülhamid period, authorities debated the best approach to changing the region. In one report, demands were made for additional judges and police officers and for schools to be set up in *Malësi* as the region suffered from many of the same ills mentioned by the reforms in the 1860s.

BBA, YA.RES, 71/35, No. 339, Yildiz Sarayi to Meclis-i Vükela, dated 5 Safer 1312 (August 9, 1894).

15. Most of the *Tanzimat* intellectual thrust behind the policy of discipline and education (*terbiye*) would focus on areas such as the *Malësi* to facilitate the application of disciplinary power (Reinkowski 2005: 246–249).
16. Excerpt from *O moj Shqypni* (Oh Albania) by Pashko Vasa, circa 1878. A number of versions of this 72-line poem composed in 1878, with slight variations, have emerged over the past 50 years. This one is drawn from the published version appearing in Jan Urban Jarnik, *Zur albanischen Sprachenkunde von Dr. Johann Urban Jarník* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1881): 3–6 [4], cf. Elsie (1995: 1: 263–265).
17. Elsie (1995: 1: 264).
18. Sami Frashëri wrote extensively about the fusion of languages and was particularly interested in how words transfered from one language to another. He used this knowledge to point out how regional dialects reflected the other languages spoken around it, especially *Toskërisht* and Greek, which, he noted, despite its "perfection" in ancient form had "become the language called today *Rumca*, an ugly and irregular language of imperfection" (Sami 1996b: 6: 4827).
19. Besides the Frashëri brothers, *Tosklık*-native Hassan Tahsini, the rector of Istanbul University in 1869 and 1870 invested his energies into designing an alphabet (written left to right) for the dialects spoken in the *Toskëri*. Scholars seem to believe that it was for these efforts that he was arrested in 1874 and incarcerated in Istanbul (Berkes 1998: 181).
20. Some of Sami's own adventures as a linguist, often misinterpreted as an essentially nationalist exercise (Trix 1999), need to be put into the much larger Ottoman intellectual context of the period.
21. AQSH, F.99D.18 f.1, letter from Filip Shiroka to Nikolla Naço, dated Beirut, September 14, 1892.
22. Ottoman colleagues as well as historians praised Pashko Vasa's administration of Lebanon (Akarlı 1993: 45–57). His advocacy for his local Arab constituencies was also legendary within the Ottoman bureaucracy, as noted in the archives. BBA, YA.HUS, 253/14, 2 Rebiyülahir 1309 [November 5, 1891].
23. Elsie (1995: 1: 263–265).
24. Revealingly, Turkish nationalists today spend considerable time making the claim that Sami's loyalties lay with a modern Turkish identity, framed in Ottoman terms, in direct contrast to claims that Sami was unequivocally an Albanian nationalist (Bilmez 2003). I argue that Sami was a loyal Ottoman subject who not only advocated the development of regional vernaculars such as *Toskërisht* but also emphasized the need for Ottoman to be the language of an empire that was the cultural melting pot of the eastern Mediterranean and Central Asian world (Kaleshi 1970).
25. In letters written in *Toskërisht* to activists in Italy and elsewhere, Sami notes a tension between what some beyond the Ottoman Empire hoped was the beginning of a drive for political separation and a still strong sense of affiliation among prominent Ottoman-*Arnavut/Shqiptar*, figures such as Sami. See AQSH, F.51.D.4.f.1–3, Sami Frashëri to Jeronim de Rada, dated Istanbul, February 20, 1881.

26. Author of the first novel (1872), the first encyclopedia (1889–1898), and dictionary (1900) in the Ottoman Turkish language, Sami's story and that of his brothers mirrors the history of similarly dynamic Ottoman subjects whose overlapping loyalties left considerable room for Palestinians from Jerusalem such as Yusuf Diya' al-Khalidi to engage in both building the foundations of a separate "national" identity and consolidating the Ottoman project (Khalidi 1997: 67–76).
27. Sami was unambiguous in identifying Albanians (*Arnavutlar*) of all faiths, as well as Muslim Slavs, as integral parts of the great Islamic nation and as members of the Ottoman state. This is an emphasis on social cohesion in the larger empire on Islamic terms that are rarely pointed out today (Frashëri 1988: 1: 21).
28. See Sami's definition of the *Arnavut* (Sami 1996a: 899). The mega province of *Arnavutluk* even plays a central role in a book attributed to Sami (which I dispute) by the editor, Ypi Kolonja (1899: 35–38, 46–49).
29. Sami Frashëri was a careful scholar and his meticulously written encyclopedia provides insight into a world he had no problem segregating into regions—*Gegalık* and *Toskalık*—and even more narrowly into villages that he and his fellow Ottoman subjects felt had shaped their own personal hybrid identity. Sami, for one, asserts that his hometown was a bastion of civilization set in a larger Balkan/Albanian context of ignorance. See his entry for his hometown, Fraşer (Sami 1996b: 5: 3353).
30. The play was translated and printed in Sofia by activist A. Ypi Kolonja in 1901: Frashëri, Sami Bey. *Besa, Drame me ghashte pamje, prej Sami Bej Frashërit, Shqiperuar nga Turqishtja prej Ab. A. Ypi Kolonja* (Sofia: Mbrothesia, 1901).
31. There are a number of reasons why scholars have misinterpreted the play as representing a glorification of highland values. That being said, reading it in the most literal sense (and after all, it was meant to be performed on stage) suggests that this tragedy was meant to convey a clear-cut message very much in line with the Ottoman reform movement's goals. See Gawrych (2006: 15–18) for an example of how the play has been misread as an anachronistic nationalist plea to Albanians.
32. Some noted the state attempts to reduce the number of vendettas between communities in and around Prizren, Prishtina, and Peja (Ipek), a direct consequence of local struggles for power (Durham 1909: 112; Roux 1992: 244).
33. Importantly, the emphasis on conjoining groups in these areas on the basis of language and not religion hints that these reformers realized that the sectarian mix among the *Malësorë* would constitute a barrier to any attempt to unify the region behind the empire if it did not formally assert in the 1856 *Hatt-ı Humayun* that Catholics and Muslims were legal equals.
34. In response to the Russian military victories and recognizing that there would be serious territorial consequences, a number of organizations were formed in the later months of 1877 to lobby European powers for the return of the status quo (i.e., no territorial rewards to the Russian state). One of these organizations was the Central Committee for the Defence of the Rights of the Albanian People, founded by all the intellectuals discussed in this chapter in December 1877 in Istanbul. Contrary to what most scholars

read into the committee, it seems clear that its initial purpose was to protect Ottoman interests by soliciting the European public (such organizations would send open letters to newspapers), claiming that they were part of national communities operating independently from the Ottoman state (Gawrych 2006: 43–45; Skendi 1967: 35–36).

35. As research has noted, measures to stem the potential for conflict in local struggles for political representation actually empowered groups in a way that ultimately divided mixed and culturally ambiguous parts of the Habsburg Empire. King's study offers, in part, a new set of tools to read how identity politics evolved in the late Ottoman Balkans (King 2002: 58–59).

3 The Compromised Empire: Ethnicity and Faith under State Power

1. For a fine summary of who initiated the deepening financial relationship between European bankers and the Ottoman state prior to 1878, see Autheman (1996: 17–47).
2. This was a more sophisticated version of British, French, and Anglo-American strategies of signing treaties with individual "tribes" that led to disaggregating larger, more militarily and economically formidable polities in the Americas, India, and Africa. The Balkans, in other words, was being turned into "Africa" because of the Ottoman default of 1875.
3. See reports on the early use of tactics that led to the removal of what the British consul suggested were more than 210,000 Muslims from the Niš area; a problem ignored by British authorities for more than two years. PRO, FO, 195/1077, Reade to Elliot, dated Constantinople, December 5, 1876.
4. PRO, FO, 881/3673, No. 366, Layard to the Earl of Derby, dated Constantinople, March 18, 1878, enclosure signed by Wassa Effendi (the pen name of Pashko Vasa). It is interesting to note that Pashko Vasa differentiated between Muslims and Albanians. Judging from other sources, Christian *Gegë* like Pashko Vasa often made this distinction, especially during times when the intentions of Europe's powers were not clear. It is frequently noted, for instance, that after overtures from leaders of the Catholic enclave of Mirdita especially, outside powers flirted with the idea of creating a separate Catholic state in the midst of partitioning Ottoman lands among neighboring Slavic and Orthodox states.
5. Signed by representatives of Muslims of the Adrianople/Edirne, Danube, and Kosova vilâyets, Istanbul, March 30, 1878, cf. Beytullah Destani (1999: 64).
6. For a comprehensive description of what members of newly established local committees were demanding, see BBA, YA.HUS, 159/109, Safvet to Bab-i Ali, dated 5 Rebiyülahir 1295 (April 29, 1878), which reports on demands made by *Toskë* (but not *Gegë*) to create a single Albanian *vilâyet* in which *Toskërisht* would be officially used.
7. In the eyes of Hussayn Pasha, Işkodra's embattled governor, the large numbers of agitated communities throughout the mountainous *Malësi* demonstrated

growing solidarity among themselves as they faced the possibility of being engulfed by a new country. This development was a reason for concern. In the hope of warning policy makers in Istanbul, the governor used the Austrian officials touring the region via Draç/Durrës to submit a detailed report on the activities of various *Malësorë* who were mobilizing to violently resist the transfer of their territory to a newly created Montenegro. HHStA, PA, XII/35, Montenegro Varia, Albanische Liga 1878–1881, document 21, Zichy to Andrassy, dated Durrazo, November 9, 1878.

8. For the original statement written in Ottoman, see *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* no. 21 (dated, 19 Recep 1295 [July 29, 1878]): 3–4.
9. See Roberts (2007: 253) for a vivid description of the expulsion of the residents of the town of Nikšić's non-Orthodox "oriental" population. Most ended up in Kosova.
10. It is suggested that the refugees settling from Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia in Kosova and Manastir alone numbered more than 140,000 (McCarthy 1995: 90–91).
11. The violent commandeering of stored food led to a number of clashes between locals and refugees, many of whom ended up roaming the Kosova/Manastir countryside looking for sustenance. The situation at one point got so bad that the Manastir governor had to be replaced for failing to stop the violence. For details, see BBA, YA.HUS, 159/85, copies of telegraphs sent from Manastir and Prizren to Interior Ministry, dated 14 Zilkade 1295 (November 9, 1878).
12. Events summarized in a report composed a year later in BBA, YA.RES, 6/10, Report filed by Ahmed, dated 7 Haziran 1296 (May 30, 1879).
13. There are dozens of works in Albanian that have suggested that these events in Prizren were seminal to the process of "awakening" the Albanian "nation." For some better examples of the *Rilindja* (renaissance) scholarship that emphasizes the events under study here, see K. Frashëri (1997) and Shpuza (1997: 39–61).
14. For retroactive reflections on the Prizren meetings and demands made at the time, see BBA, YA.RES, 6/63, copies of telegraphs sent from Prizren to War Ministry, dated 25 Şaban 1297 (August 4, 1880).
15. On the composition of the *Prizren Hey'et-i Ittihadiyesi*, (Prizren League), a year later seen by Ottoman authorities as consisting mostly of men from Dibër, including Yunus Zühdü Efendi, see BBA, YA.RES, 7/38, Report from Ahmed on contents of a telegraph sent by Manastir vilâyet office, dated 30 Ramazan 1297 (January 13, 1880).
16. The Italian consul Berio rather optimistically saw in the scale of the events an opportunity for Rome to drive a wedge between *Arnavutlar/Shqiptarë* and regional rivals of Italy. DDI, Seconda Serie 1870–1896, Volume X, Document 202, R. 353, Console Berio to Presidente del consiglio, Cairoli, dated Scutari, June 23, 1878.
17. See the memorandum composed by Pashko Vasa who had himself refused to join Mehmet Ali Pasha's delegation to Kosova, in HHStA, PA, XVII/35, documents 15–16, Montenegro Varia, Albanische Liga, Zichy to Andrassy, dated Constantinople, October 22, 1878.

18. An event reported in Vienna's press as a catastrophe for the Ottoman regime, BBA, YA.HUS, 159/62, 16 Ramazan 1295 (September 14, 1878).
19. Even at the height of the confrontation in the western Balkans immediately following the attempt to impose the Berlin Congress boundaries, many locals continued to express their loyalty to the sultan, referring to him in mystical terms as the "father" (Hasluck 1954: 228) and iterated an anger but not betrayal, an accusation reserved for others (Di Lellio 2009: 173).
20. BBA, YA.HUS, 159/62, 16 Ramazan 1295 (September 14, 1878).
21. The consequences of this attack were months of reprisals against the perpetrators and then counterattacks, a spiral of vengeance that undermined stability in both the Yakova and Prizren districts. Eventually, members of the Prizren Committee were involved in the blood feud. See YA.HUS, 159/73, report number 62, signed Yakova Mutassarif Mehmed Seyyid, dated 23 Ramazan 1295 (September 21, 1878).
22. For insight into the way Ottoman officials understood these groups to be products of local factions that competed for state resources, see BBA, YA.RES, 7/38, Report from Manastir Vali's office, dated 4 Ramazan 1297 (December 18, 1879).
23. Sometimes, Abdyl's activism seemed full of contradictions. For instance, Abdyl reportedly met regularity with Greek representatives whenever he visited his home region of Yanya/Epirus (Clayer 2006: 246–252). Not strange in itself (if we accept the logic of my larger argument) these meetings, nevertheless, seem to "contradict" the very message Abdyl was trying to send in open letters he wrote in 1879 to European powers: demanding their protection of the Ottoman Balkans from Greek annexation. See Fraşerli Abdül, "Arnavudlarin Arzuhalı," *Tercüman-ı Hakikat*, no. 255 (4 Cemaziyevel 1296 [April 26, 1879]). It should be noted that even in these letters, printed in the Ottoman press, Abdyl blamed the empire's vulnerability to Greek expansionism on local ignorance; conceding in the process that Greeks are more "civilized" while "Albanians" lacked "civilization." In this light, it is Abdyl's seemingly inconceivable overtures to "Albania's" archenemies that expose an especially important flaw in our way of interpreting the past. While Albanians today would never consider one of the Frashëris exploring a political alliance with Greeks, a product of strategic "airbrushing" from the record by post-Ottoman historians, Abdyl's ultimate failure to secure the loyalties of a crucial set of local leaders in Kosova confirms his own parochialism. While he would blame Kosovars for his failure to mobilize "Albanians," there are clearly some other factors at play.
24. Şemseddin Sami, "Muharrir Efendi'ye," *Tercüman-ı Hakikat*, no. 150 (29 Zilhicce 1295 [December 24, 1878]): 3.
25. Şemseddin Sami, "Muharrir Efendi'ye," *Tercüman-ı Hakikat*, no. 150 (29 Zilhicce 1295 [December 24, 1878]): 3.
26. For example, Ahmet Mithat, in his opinion piece written in response to the debacle in the Balkans, suggested that *Arnavutlar/Shqiptarë* would be able to consolidate the region as subjects of the empire whose loyalty had already been proved. Ahmet Mithat, "Arnavutluk," *Tercüman-ı Hakikat*, no. 5 (5 Kanuni Evvel 1295 [July 17, 1878]): 2.

27. These policy suggestions had already been circulating in Istanbul since late 1877, BBA, YA.HUS, 159/109, Safvet to Bab-i Ali, dated 5 Rebiyülahir 1295 (April 29, 1878).
28. In several letters exchanged between interested parties trying to influence Abdyl as he toured the region, some suggested the possibility of foregoing the demand to create a single *vilâyet* under a locally born governor, fearing that this proposal contradicted au courant demands to localize government administration. AQSH, F.24.D.54/1.f.246–253, Dora D'Istria to Abdyl Frahsëri, dated Rome, June 26, 1878, and AQSH, F.60.D.2.f.5–8, Thimi Krei to Jerome de Rada, dated August 26, 1878.
29. Prominent *Toskë* in Egypt openly declared their loyalty to Abdyl's agenda, which they saw as necessary to empowering those factions within the regional elite who began flirting with alliances with neighboring countries. See correspondence written in the Greek alphabet sent by Jani Vretos in Egypt to Abdyl Frashëri found in AQSH, F.21.D.8.f.4–31, dated between July 31, 1878, and October 15, 1878, as well as AQSH, F.60.D.2.f.5–8.
30. In a copy of the Geneva-based Ottoman opposition newspaper, *Istikbal*, a "letter from Prizren" advocates the implementation of regional autonomy to guard against the dismemberment of the empire. See letter signed by a member of a Dibër-based committee (most likely directed by Abdyl), in AQSH, F.23.D.25.f.1–4, dated February 22, 1880.
31. The *Cemiyet-i ilmiyye-i arnavudiyye* publicly issued its bylaws in the scientific journal *Mecmua-i ulûm* 3 (1 Muharrem 1297 [December 15, 1879]): 216–217. Incidentally, in the first issue of this new journal established by none other than the formerly imprisoned first rector of Istanbul University and advocate for the creation of an Albanian alphabet, the Tosk Hoca Tahsini, the topic of discussion was the connection between the use of a Greek "alphabet" and ensuring Greek civilization's continued renaissance in the nineteenth century. "Aklâmü-i akvâm," Mecmua-i ulûm 1 (1 Zilhicce 1296 [November 16, 1879]): 45–80. Soon after the creation of the *Cemiyet-i ilmiyye-i arnavudiyye*, their own alphabet would be proposed in the journal.
32. Şemseddin Sami, "Arnavutluk," *Tercüman-ı Hakikat*, no. 169 (20 Muharrem 1296 [January 13, 1879]): 3.
33. Şemseddin Sami, "Arnavutlukta hizmet-i maarif," *Tercüman-ı Hakikat*, no. 609 (22 Haziran 1880): 3, in Gawrych (2006: 64).
34. In a particularly valuable example of his generation's attempts to fuse modernization and Islam, which were perfectly compatible, and then "transfer" this "new civilization" to Muslims, consult Sami (1884: 179–184).
35. For the Ottoman state, the full-scale implementation of an education infrastructure began in 1881–1882. See, for instance, the declaration by the Education Ministry to create vilâyet-based educational councils. BBA, Ayniyat Defterleri, 1420, 1 Safer 1299 (December 23, 1881). For the most thorough analysis of these reforms in English, see Somel (2001: 98–108).
36. It was under Tsar Alexander II's pressure that on April 11, 1872, the Exarchate of the Bulgarian Church was formed. Although the *Rum* Patriarch declared the Bulgarian Church to be schismatic the following month, as it

was under Russian protection, no further action was taken to disrupt its development (von Mach 1907: 10–22).

37. In a report to the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Tosk Faik Konitza reports on Abdyl Frashëri's efforts to recruit future loyalists through all the *tekke* of his home region. Based in Belgium, Konitza's reading of events, and perhaps hoping to convince Vienna/Budapest that there was a movement in need of patronage, overstated the extent to which *Toskë* collaborated with *Gegë*. HHStA, PA, XIV/18 Liasse XII/2, "Mémoire sur le mouvement national albanais," dated Brussels, 1899, 7–9.
38. While his 1896 work, the Bektashi Guidebook, translated first into Greek, then French, Italian, and English, seems to suggest a plea for sectarian syncretism in a quest to unify Albanians, it is rarely considered that this rhetoric was reserved for those whose cultural distinctions did not go beyond the *Toskëri* region. See entire text in Frederick Hasluck (1929: 2: 444–453).
39. This rhetoric is remarkably out of character for somebody who so lovingly studied the Ottoman language and wrote its most important dictionaries. For this and many other reasons, I do not believe that the book is Sami's work but one the editor, Shahin Ypi Kolonja of Sofia, hoped to link to the venerated linguist and staunch Ottoman for propaganda reasons. As it is not signed by him, but written under a pseudonym, others have sought to manipulate our ignorance of the book's origin to legitimize its abrasive, racist message by posthumously attaching it to Sami. *Shqipëria. ç'ka qenë, ç'është e ç'do bëhetë?* 57–58. For insight into how Ottoman "Turkish" intellectuals engaged in this discourse, see Amit Bein (2007: 614–617).
40. The Republic of Turkey would undergo similar processes in the 1920s, when the social, economic, and cultural forces manifested through state schools or the theatre imposed political and identity uniformity (Zürcher 1997: 194–203).
41. Some scholars incorrectly link this shift with the emergence of an articulate form of nationalism that somehow transcended all the regional cultural, political, and economic schisms discussed throughout this book. To those scholars wishing to assert Naim's Bektashism as the origin of a modern Albanian identity, very little proof exists to suggest anyone actually read his prose at the time, a detail about illiteracy, especially in a nonstandardized cluster of dialects, that has been ignored (Clayer 2006: 476–477; Duijzings 2000: 157–175).
42. See ASAME, SAP, B. 667, no. 310/118 consul to MAE, dated Janina, July 19, 1906.
43. After 1912 these poems became the foundation of Albanian nationalist literature, promoted in particular by the Tosk-dominated Communist Party. This appropriation of a text written originally to universalize the creed for communal differentiation is a distortion of the nineteenth century that has tainted post-Ottoman historiography.
44. See an early study by H. Bourgeois (1922).
45. *Kalendari Kombiar* (Sofia: C. Luarasi, 1903): 21–22.
46. According to documents stored in the Albanian state archives, Egyptian *Toskë* wrote supportive letters to the only Tosk attending the famous League of Prizren meetings in 1878, Abdyl Frashëri. In these letters, they evoked

the glories of Skanderbeg and declared their willingness to fight for the homeland's freedom from Greek domination. See some examples written in the Greek alphabet in AQSH, F.21.D.8.f.4–31, dated Cairo, July 31, 1878, and AQSH, F.60.D.2.f.5–8, dated Cairo, October 15, 1878.

47. Born in Korçë in 1820, Mitko settled in Egypt in 1865, where he maintained important links with other members of the southern Balkan diaspora and had especially productive collaborative projects with Girolamo de Rada, an Italo-Albanian whose tireless work promoting Albanian consciousness would have an impact on Italian domestic politics as well. For one, Mitko assisted in the distribution of De Rada's journal, *Fiamuri Arbërit*, in Egypt. AQSH, F.24.D.54/6.f.236–7, Thimi Mitko to Jeronim De Rades, January 31, 1886. Mitko also appears to have maintained a number of links with *Toskë* in Greece, where he collaborated with A. Kullurioti on the *Zëri i Shqiptarërisë*, published in Athens between 1878 and 1879. Mitko is also known for his *Alvanike Melissa* (he Albanian Bee) published in Greek script in Alexandria in 1878. This was the first attempt to collect the Albanian-language oral literature—love songs, festival songs, fairy tales, fables, wedding songs, funerary songs, epics, and anecdotes—that were circulating throughout Egypt at the time (Elsie 1995: 1: 298–299).
48. Spiro Risto Dine (d. 1922) migrated to Egypt in 1866 at the age of 20 and collaborated with Mitko to collect folk songs. As a cofounder of the *Shoqëri e të shtypuri shkronja shqip* (Society for the Publication of Albanian Writing) while living in Shibin al-Qum, he became a leading figure in early Albanian nationalist literature. For his part, Loni Logori actively pursued education projects and wanted to establish a uniform alphabet that could be used in school textbooks. See AQSH, F.9.D.25.f.6, Logori to Athanas Tashkos, dated Alexandria, April 4, 1908.
49. See HHStA, PA, XIV/20, Liasse XIII/1.
50. See Faik Konitza, "Mémoire sur le mouvement national albanais," Brussels, January 1899, found in HHStA, PA, XIV/18, Liasse Albanien XII/2, pp. 11–12.
51. Milo Duçi (1870–1933) was another major figure in the Albanian Orthodox Christian community in Egypt. He spent most of his life in Cairo. Among his activities was serving as the Brotherhood's president and editing various publications, including *Besa*, which he edited with Thoma Abrami and *Shqipëria* and which was written specifically for Tosk Orthodox Christians in Cairo. In 1922, he founded the publishing company *Shoqëria botonjëse shqiptare/Société albanaise d'éditions* in Cairo and then published the journal *Bisedimet* in 1925.
52. Although it is not clear whether it is the same Albanian Brotherhood, as late as December of 1912, an organization calling itself the *Vellazerise Shqipëtarëve* was writing letters to Thanas Tashko and Sotir Kolea demanding that *Arnavutlar/Shqiptarë* in Egypt help fund Albanian-language schools in the homeland. See AQSH, F.54.D.67.f.54–55, Vellazërise to Tashko, dated Cairo, December 6, 1912.
53. Hailed widely in both Libya where he once served as chief administrator and Beirut where he masterfully juggled the internal dynamics of the region to become the most popular Ottoman official there after Pashko Vasa, Qemali

would gain the confidence of many British officials who apparently allowed early positive impressions of his capabilities influence their support for him as a viable partner after the collapse of order in the Balkans in 1912. See report on his legacy as popular governor in Beirut, PRO, FO, 195/1761, consul to Foreign Office, dated Beirut, August 2, 1892.

54. For a detailed profile of Qemali compiled by Austrian authorities, see HHStA, PA, XIV/7, Liasse V/1, p. 44. For his professional vitae as kept in the Ottoman archives and frequently updated throughout his life, see DH.SAID d. 26/471, last entry dated 23 Zilkade 1326 (December 17 1908).
55. Qemali was also deeply engaged in events in Egypt, especially if they involved Greece (Kemal Bey and Story 1920: 304; Prifti 1978: 91; Hanioğlu 1985: 360).
56. On Gaqi Adhamidhi's life in Cairo and Beni-Souef, see HHStA, PA, XIV/16 Liasse XII/7, Maryanski to Velics, Cairo, June 21, 1901, and ASMAE, Serie P. Politica (1891–1916), Pacco 669, Cairo, November 21, 1910, and Pacco 671, dated Cairo, May 16, 1911.
57. As late as 1907, Qemali advocated the creation of "una liga Greco-Albanese" in an effort to thwart Bulgarian domination in Macedonia. ASAME, Serie P. Politica 1891–1916, Busta 665, no. 365/108, Consul to Foreign Minister, dated Athens, April 26, 1907.
58. See HHStA, PA, XXXVIII/391, dated Manastir, August 26, 1901.
59. See document 73, "Declaration," dated Athens, March 22, 1907, cf. Hoxha (1985: 102–105).
60. DDI, vol. 6, 266/144, Nigra a Prinetti, dated Vienna, February 16, 1902, volume 6, 109–110.
61. *The Times* (London): May 7, 1884, and Skendi (1967: 306–307).
62. According to the French consul in Shkodër, the French government was monitoring the way in which Greece was actively distributing materials that promoted the idea of establishing a unified, single Balkan state of non-Slavs. See AMAE, Paris, Turquie, CP Scutari, 1884–1889, no. 129, Le Reé à Ferry, dated Scutari, November 24, 1888.
63. See de Rada's editorial in *Fiamuri Arbërit*, March 30, 1884; cf. Skendi (1967: 308 ff. 73).
64. On the local response to Athens's obvious ambitions, see HHStA, PA, XIV/6 Albanien XII/7, no. 14, Ippen to Gołuchowski, dated Scutari, March 22, 1902, and newspaper editorials from *Drita* (Sofia) January 17–31, 1902.
65. Recall that the Ottomans soundly defeated Greece in the 1897 war (Boyar 2007: 78).
66. Ottoman intelligence reports that Qemali was busy negotiating with the Greek ambassador in Istanbul about such plans, already more than a decade old. BBA, BEO, Dahiliye Giden, 224/751, 6 Muharram 1325 (October 19, 1907).
67. See report from Austrian consul in Athens whose conversations with members of the Greek foreign ministry revealed an already strong relationship with Qemali, who frequently traveled to Greece. HHStA, PA, XIV/9, Albanien V/6, no. 20D, Mittag to Aehrenthal, dated Athens, May 26, 1907.

68. See Qemali's explanation of his proposal "Memorandum on the State of the Empire" sent to the sultan in 1892 (Kemal Bey and Story 1920: 208–219).
69. For details of his efforts as loyal Ottoman, see BBA, HR.SYS, 1792/1, Tawfik Pasha to Anthopoulos Pasha, no. 46333–46328, dated Istanbul, March 3, 1902.
70. On Qemali's sentiments toward the British, which would translate into open praise for British civilization in the newspaper *Osmanlı*, see BBA, HR.SYS, 1792/1, no. 15918/90, Münir Bey to Tawfik Pasha, dated Paris, February 19, 1902. For an example of this media campaign to highlight the need for the Ottoman state to move closer to Britain for the benefits of obtaining modern civilization, see "Ingiltere Dostluğu," *Osmanlı*, no. 111, dated August 30, 1902.
71. Ottoman officials interpreted Qemali's overtures to rebels in Kosova and Manastir not as nationalistic but as a desperate effort to secure influence in events that were spiraling out of control. See BBA, HR.SYS, 1792/1, no. 380/1407, Cemil Pasha to Tawfik Pasha, dated Vienna October 20, 1902.
72. BBA, BEO, Hariciye Gelen, 162–165/18 no. 4021, dated February 21, 1904.
73. For a detailed explanation of the inner workings of a local ring based in Vlorë that smuggled weapons and banned printed material, see police report, BBA, Irade Dahiliye, Za 1320/no. 18/2053, Şakir Pasha to Istanbul, dated February 12, 1903.
74. BBA, HR.SYS, 1792/1, no. 99, Mahmud Nadim to Tawfik Pasha, dated Vienna, March 26, 1902.
75. BBA, Irade Hususi, S 1320/no. 51/213, dated May 25, 1902.

4 Exchange and Governance: Boundaries and the Struggle to Define/Confine People

1. In Bulgaria, methods to stop the return of Muslims to their homes and villages after the 1877–1878 war included the requirement of witness testimony from Bulgarian Christians to ensure that each returnee was not a "known" criminal. The incentive for lying was linked to the property those giving testimony could keep if the previous owners did not return. Other measures adopted to discourage Muslims from returning was the withholding of food supplies needed to resettle in their destroyed farming communities (Ipek 1994: 114–130).
2. The British embassy in Istanbul reported in 1867 that the Pashalık of Niš and Novipazar, characterized as the "Albanian" frontier separating the then-autonomous Serbian principality from the rest of the Ottoman Empire, was inhabited by at least 300,000 "Albanians." Presumably it was these people who were being targeted for expulsion in the 1870s. See enclosure in Political Report number 33, dated Belgrade, October 19, 1867, report written by J.A. Longworth sent to Lord Stanley found in PRO, FO, 78/1974 no. 35, Longworth to Henry Elliott, dated Belgrade, November 1, 1867.
3. For insight into how these "new areas" (Novi Krajevi) were initially integrated into the newly created Kingdom of Serbia, Milićević (1884) provides an eyewitness study.

4. This was especially important in the "new areas'" towns, where a majority non-Christian population lived before the war. According to Serbian historiography, disputed by a census conducted by Ottomans prior to the 1875–1878 war, 41 percent of the population in "new areas" such as Leskovac was Muslim (Nikolić-Stojančević 1975: 10–11). This presented considerable problems when large numbers either refused to leave or started to return from their temporary safe havens in Austrian—or Ottoman—administered areas.
5. There was considerable violence along the newly established borders between Bosnia and Serbia, where Ottoman officials reported that Albanian refugees constantly raided into areas that had once been their homes but by 1878 had been transferred to Serbia. See BBA, HR.SYS, 128/22, Bosna Governor report, dated Sarajevo, May 31, 1880.
6. As explained in BBA, HR.SYS, 128/22, dated May 31, 1880.
7. For examples of how confrontation with Ottoman and Montenegrin delegations touring the region may have been led by newly resettled refugees, see BBA, YA.HUS, 159/62, dated 16 Ramazan 1295 (September 14, 1878).
8. The context was violent persecution by Austro-Hungarian troops entering the region and the subsequent alliance, resulting in the Habsburg occupation of Herzegovina (Erdeljanović 1926: 173–182).
9. For differing opinions as to how each *pleme* (known most commonly in English as "tribe") was divided into *bratstva/bratstvo* and whether or not they composed of exogamous groups, see Cvijić (1918: 319–323) and Durham (1928: 35–36).
10. This included living with non-Orthodox, non-Slavicized communities such as the Catholic and Muslim *Malësorë* in Plava, Gusi, and Hoti (Cvijić 1918: 319–320).
11. BBA, YA.HUS, 162/103, 18 Zilkade 1296 (November 4, 1879), and BBA, YA.HUS, 163/11, 10 Muharram 1297 (December 25, 1879).
12. In a letter written to the sultan in Ottoman, Ali "Pasha" of Gusi promised either loyalty or rebellion in much the same terms as these. AQSH F.24.D.35.f.19, dated 1882.
13. The French consul reported that Ali had been put under house arrest and sent to Istanbul in October 1881 only to return in late November from what the consul then determined were just "consultations." Regardless of the nature of the trip, Ali of Gusi became a part of the Ottoman state, see AMAE Nantes: CCS, 1900/1911\, no. 73, Consul to Ambassador Bissot, dated Scutari, December 5, 1881.
14. One of his roles was to help police the larger Novipazaar, *Malësi*, Herzegovina region. Muslim beys in Herzegovina, for instance, reportedly worked together with Ali of Gusi to suppress local Muslim and Christian groups smuggling weapons and livestock from Montengro and Serbia. AMAE Nantes: CCS, 1900/1911, no. 78, Consul to Ambassador Bissot, dated Scuatri, March 18, 1882.
15. Ottoman success in co-opting the previously rebellious Ali of Gusi was not unique, of course. Similar arrangements with locals such as Hassan Pasha and Essad Pasha led to the suppression of a local uprising in Kalkandelen (Tetova) in November 1880. As with Ali, the Sublime Porte had the resources

necessary to subdue even the most dangerous of rebel leaders with promises of coveted weapons or money, land, and prestige. See HHStA, PA, XII/35, no. 130, Lippich to von Haymerle, dated Scutari, November 9, 1880, documents 71r–71v.

16. For a summary in French of the Ottoman government's position, see BBA, YA.RES, 7/52, Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Ambassadors of Great Powers, September 22, 1880. Derviş Pasha, the commander in charge with enforcing the treaty, wrote a series of reports explaining why this process was disastrous for the empire. BBA, YA.RES, 9/30, 3 Safar 1298 (January 6, 1881).
17. See DDI, Seconda Serie V. X, Doc. 37, report no. 334, Berio al Corti, dated Scutari, April 1, 1880.
18. On the "Corti Compromise," see Skendi (1967: 61–63).
19. BBA, Y.MTV, 49/133, 26 Ramazan 1297 (September 3, 1880).
20. According to French documents, the use of force to impose these frontiers was first considered in early April 1880 (Skendi 1967: 63).
21. For details of how another series of "compromises" was reached by the Great Powers as they faced diplomatic failure in *Malësi* (as well as of Derviş Pasha's role as Abdülhamid's loyal henchman in the eventual transfer of the seaport Ulqin), see BBA, YA.RES, 6/66, correspondence between the Ottoman Foreign Ministry and European Embassies, 28 Şaban 1297 (August 6, 1880). For an explanation of the strategic importance of these contested districts and why, as far as the British consul was concerned, ceding Ulqin (Dulcigno) to Montenegro would not compromise *Malësorë* safety, see PRO, FO, 421/36, no. 172, Kirby Green to Earl Granville, dated Scutari, June 25, 1880.
22. For a summation of the events following the "Dulcigno arrangements," see Skendi (1967: 63–68).
23. See letters lobbying the British state in AQSH F.24.D.5/1.f.1–2, dated July 13, 1878. In addition, reports from the Catholic Church in Shkodër observe the continued flow of refugees throughout the 1888–1893 period: AQSH F.132.D.5.f.1–5.
24. The immediate aftermath of World War I put Montenegro, occupied by Austria for much of the war, in direct collision with a "unionist" movement that pushed through an agenda that would force Montenegro to succumb to Serbian territorial ambitions supported by the Serbian king's British allies (Lederer 1963: 114). Also see the comments by a U.S. intelligence officer, who believed that Serbian and British interests undermined the concerns of Montenegro during the interwar period, PRO, FO, 371/8903, "Memorandum respective the incorporation of Montenegro in the Jugoslav Kingdom," by Count de Salis, dated April 18, 1923.
25. These measures were taken to harass and offend Montenegro's Muslim population, inducing them to leave in large numbers throughout the 1880s and 1890s. See ASMAE, Serie P. Politica 1891–1916, Busta 665, no. 370/165, Consul to Foreign Ministry, dated Scutari, July 5, 1906.
26. Muslim businesses in Podgoriza were reportedly targeted by these provisions, a form of harassment that resulted in a decade-long exodus of the once large Muslim Geg population. BBA, HR.SYS, 129/45, report no. 7 from

Işkodra *vilâyet* to Interior Ministry, dated 27 Zilevvel 1307 (December 17, 1889).

27. That said, violence was used when it expedited the departure of resilient Muslim *Malësorë* communities. In several reports it is clear that Montenegrin forces targeted Muslims for the specific reason of expelling them from the country: BBA, Y.PRK.MYD, 4/92, 28 Recep 1303 (May 2, 1886).
28. See letters and reports from Archbishop's office in Shkodër on the shift of Montenegrin state policies toward Geg Catholics. AQSH, F.132.D.19.f.1–11, dated between 1880 and 1883.
29. At the time of ceding Ulqin to Slav Montenegrin forces, a long process of the forced removal of the port's Geg inhabitants led to a new practice of arbitrarily confiscating property under the principle of "eminent domain," which resulted in the impoverishment of a historically wealthy community. This plan convinced the Ottoman government in Shkodër to set up a commission in order to monitor the process. This surveillance was undertaken in the hope of ensuring some financial compensation for these Ottoman subjects who were forced to leave their hometowns now under Montenegrin control. BBA, Y.PRK.MYD, 1/60, 8 Zilkade 1297 (October 12, 1880).
30. BBA, HR.SYS, 129/45, report no. 7 from Işkodra vilayet to Interior Ministry, dated 27 Zilevvel 1307 (December 17, 1889).
31. While the details of this agreement remain unclear beyond several preliminary guidelines, the fact that both governments were by 1884 working in unison to standardize the transfer of land (and to some extent to protect locals) suggests that enough pressure was put on these regimes to faithfully represent the interests of locals. A copy of the original document in the Montenegrin National Archives used for this study can be found in the Albanian Historical Institute in Tirana: Document number AIH 836/51, Commission Agreement with Seven Articles, dated July 12, 1884.
32. Russian money helped build up the infrastructure of the frontier regions, improving roads and constructing bridges to cut by days the travel time between the highlands and the coasts. See an example of such construction at Irjanica near Plava, BBA, Y.MTV, 70/174, copy of telegraph from Vali Farik Edhem Paşa, 28 Rebiyülahir 1310 (June 20, 1892).
33. ASMAE, Serie A Affairi Politici (1881–1891), Busta 1, F. 1889, no. 145/82, Consul to Foreign Minister, dated Scutari, April 15, 1889.
34. On reports of Ottoman government's efforts to bribe local communities in Kelmendi, Hoti, and Gruda to not accept the monetary offers of Montenegro, see ASMAE, Serie P. Politica (1891–1916), Busta 666, no. 90/36, Consul to Foreign Ministry, dated Scutari, March 9, 1905.
35. Recalling that Serbia's "New Area" administration strategically created a cluster of Albanian-populated villages along the new border with Boletini's Mitrovica/Vushtrri areas of Kosova, a string of reports from Ottoman officials on the booming business of smuggling food and livestock raids suggests that many "victims" of "Geg" raids were other "*Gegë*." In one particular report, officials explained how a group of Serbs and Albanians had just returned to the Ottoman village of Matahiya from raiding the border villages on the Serbian side of the frontier, stealing animals and cutting

wood from their forest. See BBA, HR.SYS, 128/38, report 64205/159, Foreign Ministry to Khalid Bey, consul in Belgrade, dated Istanbul, August 27, 1881.

36. For various documents on Austrian impressions of Boletini's relations with local Serbs at the time, see HHStA, PA, XXXVIII/398 no. 108, Rappapart to Gołuchowski, dated Prizren August 9, 1897, folios 24r–54v.
37. By 1902 Ottoman officials had grown tired with Isa Boletini's fluid loyalties. They often complained of his cooperation with local officials in the Orthodox Serb community who were smuggling weapons and supplies into Kosova from Serbia. See BBA, TFR.1.A, 5/468, document 85, 28 Şubat 1318 (March 13, 1903).
38. BBA, YA.HUS, 442/73, Kosova Governor's Report, telegraph no. 32, dated Prishtina, 24 Zilkade 1320 (February 22, 1903).
39. On the incidents that led to the murder of Russian consul in Mitrovica in early 1903, see BBA, YA.HUS, 436/6, Sublime Porte to Ministry of War, dated 1 Cemaziyelahir 1320 (November 5, 1902).
40. For details, see Külçe (1944b: 285–288) and BBA, TFR.1.KV, 23/2261, Rıza Bey to Interior Minister, dated Yakova, 10 Recep 1321 (July 9, 1903).
41. A long string of communications between Boletini and key European and Ottoman figures reveals a shrewd regional player whose ambitions were to play the various interests off each other to enhance his own prestige and influence. BBA, TFR.1.KV, 191/19077 dated 9 Safar 1326 (March 13, 1908).
42. For Ottoman state reports on the events, see BBA, TFR.1.KV, 206/20501, dated Prishtina, 24 Cemaziyelahir 1326 (July 24, 1908).
43. BBA, TFR.1.KV, 206/20501, Galib Bey to Palace, dated 1 Temmuz 1324 (July 7, 1908).
44. Upward of 30,000 men are said to have come to the support of the revolution (Külçe 1944a: 11–15). See also BBA, YEE, 71/47, dated 24 Cemaziyelahir 1326 (July 24, 1908).
45. Külçe (1944a: 60–61) provides a copy of the telegraphs.
46. Ahmet Şerif, a journalist for the Young Turk daily *Tanin*, provides an invaluable report on the extent of destruction that this campaign levied on the region. See, for instance, Ahmet Şerif, "Ipek'den Mitroviça'ya," *Tanin*, number 650, dated 16 Cemaziyelahir 1328 (June 23, 1910).
47. On a number of local alliances in the post-1908 period established by Isa Boletini, which clearly concerned CUP authorities in Kosova, see BBA, TFR.1.KV, 151/15031, Kosova Vali to Interior Minister, dated 8 Recep 1327 (July 26, 1909).
48. It is reported that at the height of CUP oppression in the western Balkans and rumors of Bulgarian and Serbian invasion, Boletini openly boasted about his still-valued role as intermediary to diplomats and European journalists, all quite keen to win the loyalty of a man responsible for instigating such diplomatic trouble for so many years. PRO, FO, 109/2407.4322, August 20, 1912.
49. The revolts in *Gegëni* took on dramatic proportions by 1910 and 1911, leading many intellectuals based in Istanbul to suspect that the survival

of the empire rested in the state's ability to suppress what they saw as the Montenegrin and Serbian corruption of local *Malësorë* and "backward" rural leaders. See representative sentiments circulating a leading newspaper of the time, Lütfi Fikri, "Arnavutluk Iğtişâşı," *Ifham*, 22 Mayıs 1328 (June 4, 1910), front page, and Lütfi Fikri, "Arnavutluk Islahatı," *Ifham*, 25 Mayıs 1328 (June 7, 1910), front page.

50. Gawrych (2006: 185–202) offers a fine summary of these events.
51. The key is how prominently non-Turks played a role in the CUP that took over power in late 1908. The preeminent scholar of the CUP, Şükrü Hanioğlu, considers the support of key elements of "the Albanians" as essential to the success of the revolution. It was Albanians who "made the physical execution of the revolution possible." While Hanioğlu goes on to suggest that the CUP cynically sold itself in broader "Ottomanist" terms to win over like-minded reformists, there is no indication in Hanioğlu's masterful account to suggest that the leaders of the CUP could ever imagine how universal the support for the Constitution and the "Ottomanist movement" they would enjoy from the masses. The outburst of support for a new start in the Ottoman Empire, therefore, was not a product of CUP propaganda, but a real response from the Ottoman masses knowing full well the consequences if the empire were to ever collapse (Hanioğlu 2001: 261).

5 Learning the Wrong Lesson: Local Challenges to Educational Reform

1. Throughout this chapter I question the functionalist role of the state as asserted by proponents of state educational reform who, since Durkheim, believed that the capacities of the state could overcome "primordial" social traditions. Timothy Mitchell's account of the attempt by the British to reorganize Egyptian society through education problematically adopts this instrumentalist rendering of the school (Mitchell 1988: 63–94).
2. For more detail on how late Hamidian era reformers trusted education to direct the empire's people toward progress (*terakkiyat*) and the community of civilization (*daire-i medeniyyete*), see Mahmut Cevat bin Nafi's post-Ottoman study (1922: 102–106). For a comprehensive summary of Istanbul's activities up to 1903, see the Education Ministry Yearbook: *Salname-i Nezareti Maarifi Umumiye* (Istanbul: Asır Matbaası, 1321).
3. On how Midhat Pasha in 1862 went about establishing an industrial school (*islahhane*) as an instrument of reform, see Kansu (1930: 121).
4. In a recent work, Nathalie Clayer (2005: 307–308) reveals that the elite students of the *Mekteb-i Mülkiye* were obviously contemptuous of their rural Albanian-speaking countrymen for their blind faith in Islam and their lack of nationalist (Ottoman) convictions.
5. See Nafi (1922: 101–103). For a complete list of the articles, see pages 469–509. According to one author, the spirit of the Education Law of 1869 was to encourage the integration of different communities into the "Ottoman family," as the school taught "harmony and friendship" (Ergin 1977: 2: 413–414).

6. That being said, Boriçi was ultimately identified as a dedicated reformer and a strong proponent of using education in otherwise "backward" northern Geg territories. As a result, he was reappointed to the region in 1888 to again promote a state-sanctioned curriculum in this highly contested area of the shrinking Ottoman Balkans (Bartl 1968: 142).
7. Indeed, as Somel suggests (2001: 207–216, 225–226, 234–235), the Ottoman state was particularly interested in "educating" its peripheral populations, including *Gegë*, regardless of their religious affiliation.
8. BBA, TFR.1.ŞKT, 67/6629, Gosine district financial report no. 10/1, 13 Haziran 1321 (June 17, 1905).
9. See BBA, MV, 79/80, 5 Şevval 1311 (April 12, 1894).
10. The Ottomans observed that the Austrians did not concede anything to pan-Slavic activists who championed Russia as an educational patron. For reports of Austro-Hungarian activities inside Bosnia and its relations with the Slav population after its occupation in 1878, see BBA, Y.PRK.TŞF, 1/14, Vienna Embassy to Porte, 8 Cemaziyelevvel 1296 (May 1, 1879).
11. For the way that Ottoman officials in Shkodër interpreted the impact of these Italian schools and how they initially attempted to prevent local children from attending them, see BBA, MV, 68/25, Işkodra administration to Ministry of Interior, dated 12 Rebiyülahir 1309 (November 15, 1891).
12. See AQSH, F.132.D.1.f.8, Bishop of Lezha to church officials in Scutari and Rome, dated Scutari, June 28, 1849. Later, the archbishop of Durrës was also busy organizing a school with Austro-Hungarian money to accomplish the same goal. AQSH, F.131.D.2.f.1–13, dated Scutari, July 16, 1856. A year later, bishops in Shkodër and Durrës were discussing ways to finance private schools and the salaries of their teachers, AQSH, F.132.D.29.f.1–2; D.31.f.1–3 dated Scutari and Durrazo throughout the spring of 1857. The Italians, unified by the 1870s, however, clearly did not accept de facto Austrian and Vatican authority.
13. AMAE, Nantes: CCS, 1900/1911, no. 243, Consul to Ambassador Coustans, dated Scutari, September 13, 1902.
14. For the Ottoman state, the full-scale implementation of an education infrastructure began in 1881–1882. See, for instance, the declaration by the Education Ministry to create *vilâyet*-based educational councils. BBA, Ayniyat Defterleri, 1420, 1 Safer 1299 (December 23, 1881). For the most thorough analysis of these reforms in English, see Somel (2001: 98–108).
15. In the north, as Austro-Hungarian and British consuls in Shkodër often noted, loyalties based on faith could not be assumed at a time when so much money was available. The British Consul at Shkodër, Green, was also aware of the fluid value that sectarian identities had in the region; see PRO, FO, 78/2628, no. 15, Consul Green to Foreign Office, dated Scutari, March 3, 1877.
16. For example, the Boston-funded *Görice Arnavut Ortadokslarin Kilise Ittifaki* petitioned the Porte for formal recognition, which it failed to obtain after protests from the Patriarch. BBA, Bab-ı Ali Evrak Odası, 265991, 2 Saban 1325 (September 10, 1907). On the later repression of the *Arnavut Ortadoks Hristiyan Cemiyeti*, who continued to struggle for a national church, see BBA, DH.MUI, 31–2/25, 1 Şevval 1328 (October 6, 1910).

17. This concession to the *Rum* Orthodox church took place at a time when other communities were granted institutional, political, and spiritual autonomy from Ottoman and Patriarch controls. See HHStA, PA, XIV/24, Albanien, No. 49B, "*Mémoire über Albanien (Ende 1901 bis Anfang 1905*)," Calice to Gołuchowski, dated Constantinople, November 16, 1898.
18. See BBA, TFR.1.MN, 74/7333, dated 3 Eylül 1321 (September 16, 1905).
19. Within six months, the school's staff, citing threats and a shrinking student body, returned to Italy. See AMAE, Nantes: CCS, 1900/1911, report number 285, Consul of France in Scutari to Ambassador Coustans in Constantinople, dated Scutari, July 26, 1902.
20. In a translated article of the *Keri* newspaper, dated January 9, 1902, it is clear that there were Greek concerns of Italian influence over the Tosk population. The newspaper suggested that Italy had "created" an Albanian population and was filling it with ideas of liberation, something that Greeks could not stand for. See ASMAE, SAP, Pacco 665, no. 106/29, Legation to Rome, dated Athens, January 12, 1902.
21. That said, Italian efforts often seemed to be driven more by fear of Austrian penetration in the region. ASMAE, SAP, Pacco 664, no. 326/78, consul to Rome, dated Janina, October 15, 1900. The consul reports that while visiting Prevesa, a Geg Catholic with an Austrian passport was distributing Austrian propaganda and books written in the local Tosk dialect. Another Geg ended up in prison in Prevesa for disseminating similar Austrian propaganda in the Premeti region.
22. See AMAE, Nantes: CCJ, 1890–1913, no. 6, vice consul to Linbert, dated Janina, April 20, 1894.
23. ASMAE, SAP, Pacco 664, no. 95/34, consul to Rome, dated Janina, April 2, 1900.
24. Mustafa Sufi, "Yanya vilayetinin ahval-ı umumiyesi," *Tanin*, 16 Temmuz 1325 (August 10, 1907).
25. The Kosova governor, Derviş Pasha, reported to the Sublime Porte that while *Toskë* were demanding greater political autonomy, and even the creation of a single *vilâyet*, their demands did not include *Toskërisht*-language schools to replace the large number of Greek-language schools. BBA, YA.HUS, 159/109, 5 Şevval 1295 (October 2, 1878).
26. For the Ottoman state, the full-scale implementation of educational reform began in 1881–1882. See, for instance, the declaration by the Education Ministry to create *vilâyet*-based education councils. BBA, Ayniyat Defterleri, 1420, dated 1 Safer 1299 (December 23, 1881) and specifically a *Meclis-i maârif* in Yanya and Selanik; see document dated 16 Cemaziyelevvel 1299 (April 6, 1882).
27. At the end of 1900, the Yanya governor reports on the opening of a middle school in a neighborhood that locals had lobbied him hard for the past two years to build in face of the "Greek" propaganda that was being taught in the only other middle school in the area. BBA, Y.MTV, 197/50, Yanya vali telegraph no. 32, dated 8 Şaban 1317 (December 13, 1900).
28. In either case, as the French consul reports, local Tosk clergy and teachers used these schools to secretly instruct students in *Toskërisht*. See AMAE,

Nantes: CCJ, 1890–1913, no. 6, vice consul to Linbert, dated Janina, April 20, 1894.

29. Compare the number of state schools in each *vilâyet* as reported in the 1903 *Salname-i Nezareti Maarifi Umumiye*, pp. 318–322, 627–650, 661–676, and 698–706. See also Rexhepagiq (1970: 151–152).
30. When rural schools were built, as in Suhareka in the Prizren district, it was often the case that Kosova authorities complained that they had no money to pay for a schoolmaster, so that many of these new schools remained closed. BBA, TFR.1.KV, 23/2265, dated 10 Recep 1321 (July 9, 1903).
31. Mehmed Said Pasha, Grand Vizier on numerous occasions during the post-Berlin period, complained in his memoirs that in 1902 he had laid out an aggressive reform package to the sultan but this was largely torpedoed over the next few years because of bureaucratic foot-dragging and the sultan's own paranoia (Said Paşa 1910: 2: 392–396).
32. BBA, YA.HUS, 217/67. Report from the Interior Minister, number 202, dated April 15, 1880. The Ministry also speaks of subsequent Greek state lobbying in Istanbul, demanding that the Sublime Porte put pressure on the Romanian autonomous government to shut the newspaper down.
33. Evidence of this can be found in the second issue of the bilingual newspaper *La Renaissance Albanaise* (Rilindja Shqiptare), published by Thoma Abrami in Bucharest on July 3, 1903.
34. For details of this process, see the report of two recent graduates returning to their villages after receiving an education in Athens. AMAE, Nantes: CCJ, 1890–1913, no. 22, vice consul to Linbert, Chargé d'Affaires French Embassy in Constantinople, dated Janina, July 30, 1890.
35. By 1898, Greece and an organization based in Athens—*Sillogo*—actively financed scholarships and the salaries of teachers in Ottoman territories to promote the expansion of Hellenic culture. In the *vilâyet* of Yanya, in 1898 *Sillogo* invested 2,750 gold napoleons in schools located in Delvino, Premeti, Berat, Valona, Conitza, Prevesa, and Gjirokastër. See details in Italian consular report, ASMAE, SAP, Pacco 666, no. 57/16, Consulate to Rome, dated Janina, March 1, 1898.
36. ASMAE, SAP, Pacco 667, consul to Rome, dated Janina, April 28, 1906.
37. This school was by far the most secular and important institute to Ottoman politics of the last 50 years, and many of the CUP's leaders committed themselves to ideas about constitutionalism while attending the school (Tahsin 1910: 34–45).
38. He was murdered on February 12, 1905, just two days after the *Toskërisht* sermon he performed in front of the outraged Metropolitan (Faensen 1980: 133–134).
39. A local priest named Vassil followed Negovani's lead and taught in the local vernacular in Negovan, the birthplace of Negovani. Vassil's teacher, Christo, had been murdered on the road to Manastir on November 28, 1907, by Greek bandits. Vassil himself preached in *Toskërisht* well into 1909 in the commune of Negovan but was ultimately silenced, much like Negovani and Christo, by *Rum* church authorities. See the detailed history of the use of *Toskërisht* in church liturgy and Greek resistance in ASMAE, SAP, Pacco 668, no. 227/79, consular report to Rome, Manastir, no date.

40. See BBA, Irade-i Hususi, 133/22.S.1312 (August 26, 1894).
41. See the Italian consul report on the creation of a multiconfessional school in Shkodër and its impact on Ottoman officials, ASMAE, Serie P. Politica (1891–1916), Busta 573, no. 43363/90, MAE, a Consulto in Scutari, dated Roma, November 20, 1892.
42. According to Kodaman's outdated study (1991: 125–126) between 1882 and 1894, 51 *idadi* schools were constructed, including the boarding school in Manastir (1884) under discussion.
43. BBA, TFR.1.ŞKT, 24/2327, dated Manastir, 1 Ramazan 1321 (November 21, 1903).
44. BBA, TFR.1.ŞKT, 24/2346, copy of Ali Riza's transfer, dated Manastir, 6 Ramazan 1321 (November 26, 1903).
45. See AQSH, F.102.D.82.f.1–2, dated Korcë, January 1, 1893.
46. Perhaps paradoxically, the biggest advocate of the reform of the Albanian language, Sami Frashëri, is also seen as the main force behind the modernization of the Ottoman Turkish language. For a quote that has been misleadingly attributed to Sami: "Albania cannot exist without the Albanians, the Albanians cannot exist without the Albanian language, and the latter cannot exist without its own alphabet and without schools," see *Shqipëria ç''ka qenë, ç'është e ç'do bëhetë*, 46.
47. For a recent study on the developments that ultimately led to the establishment of the first series of "Albanian" schools in the Ottoman western Balkans, see Myzyri (2004: 11–33), and for a similar reading of the period, see Skendi (1967: 129–164).
48. HHStA, PA, XIV/18 Albanien XII/2. Faik Konitza, "*Mémoire sur le mouvement national albanais*," p. 11, dated Brussels, January 1899.
49. By 1892, Luarasi was able to establish schools in the villages of Luaras (his hometown), Selenicë, Vodicë, and Treskë with the assistance of Bucharest-based Nikolla Naço (Schirò 1904: 88) and Nuçi Naçi, "Shkolla shqipe ne Korçë," *Diturija* (March 1, 1927): 170.
50. Established by a group of influential *Toskë* living in Istanbul in late 1879, the society initiated a process by which an alphabet would be established and a standard grammar would be part of daily curriculum in schools accepting the use of these books. Sami Frashëri's version would be used in many newspapers at the time. It consisted of 36 letters, of which five were Greek, six Cyrillic, and the rest Latin (Dozon 1879: 335–338). Also see the newspaper report on earlier flirtations with Pashko Vasa's alphabet, "L'alphabet latin appliqué à la langue albanaise," *Courrier d'Orient*, dated Constantinople, October 12, 1878. Much debate over the next 40 years would take place over revisions of the alphabet, leading to a congress in Manastir in 1908, just days after the uprisings in the region that thrust the CUP into power. For the way Geg contributions to the alphabet debate were partially incorporated at the time, see Osmani (2004).
51. A circular letter written in Greek targeting priests and the population of various villages in which Luarasi was active outlines the threats. HHStA, PA, XIV/21, Albanien XIII/18, dated September 20, 1892, signed by Archbishop Philaretos.

52. Despite such pressures, the school remained open and even a school for girls was founded in 1891, reflecting a dogged belief in the merits of Tosk schools by some in Istanbul. The girls' school was established in Korçë with money raised by Gjerasim Qiriazi and American and English Protestant groups. The school's staff was all Tosk graduates of either the Robert College in Istanbul or the Samokov American School in Bulgaria. Able to survive despite the Metropolitan's opposition because of active lobbying from the American Board of Missions in Manastir, by 1898 the school had 45 full-time students, providing the only educational opportunity for girls in the region. HHStA, PA, XIV/24, Albanien Liasse XVI/4, no. 3, Prochaska to Gołuchowski, dated Manastir, January 9, 1905.
53. See also HHStA, PA, XIV/24 Albanien Liasse XIV/4, no. 2, Kral to Gołuchowski, dated Manastir, January 4, 1901.
54. In file ASMAE, SAP, Pacco 664, no. 47/25, consul to Rome, dated Manastir, September 15, 1900, an enclosed letter in French addressed to the ambassador in Istanbul discusses the aspirations of *Shqiptarë* in Elbasan to introduce the use of the vernacular in local schools.
55. Despite all efforts to attract students to this school, it appears that no more than 15 studied at the school at any given time. See ASMAE, SAP, Pacco 666, no. 797/391, consul to Rome, dated Athens, October 1, 1905.
56. Nuçi Naçi, "Shkolla shqipe në Korçë," pp. 166–169. cf. Skendi (1967: 135).
57. This can be observed in their textbooks when compared with those published by rivals. Similarly, the pedagogical philosophies championed by *Drita* loyalists stand out for their progressive as well as pluralistic values, as outlined by Nikolla Naço in correspondence with fellow members; see AQSH, F.19 D.25f.11–13, dated Bucharest, May 10, 1892.
58. See *Drita*, no. 64, January 14, 1905, and Ibrahim Temo's letter to Hima, AQSH, F.19 D.30fl.3, dated Brăile, January 10, 1905. Members of the *Drita* faction received this school quite enthusiastically. The poet Asdreni, for instance, wrote a poem for the school. See "Shqiptarët e Kostancës," *Drita*, no. 88, dated February 26, 1907, p. 3.
59. For a detailed report on the distribution of these newspapers throughout Europe, Egypt, and the Americas, see HHStA, PA, XIV/16, Liasse XII/1, no. 51, Kral to Gołuchowski, dated June 28, 1904, pp. 23–32.
60. Among those who founded presses in Bulgaria after studying in Romania, Kristo Luarasi, Jani Trebicka, and Nikolla Lako stand out.
61. See ASMAE, SAP, Pacco 668, no. 180/40, from consul to Rome, dated Manastir, August 3, 1909.
62. HHStA, PA, XIV/15, Albanien XI/7, telegram 8333, Prochaska to consuls based in Salonika and Istanbul, dated Prizren, July 19, 1909, p. 15. For information on Greek, Bulgarian, and Albanian mixed delegations from Salonika, Serres, and Drama, see HHStA, PA, XIV/15, Albanien XI/7, telegram 7981, sent by Otto Ritter von Gunther, dated Salonika, July 20, 1909, p. 30.
63. HHStA, PA, XIV/15, Albanien XI/7. no. 106, "*Spezielle Verwaltungsangelegenheiten*," Kral to Aehrenthal, dated Scutari, August 5, 1909.

64. HHStA, PA, XIV/15, Albanien XI/6, no. 10, Posfai to Aehrenthal, dated Manastir, March 7, 1909, pp. 65–77.
65. For copies of declarations of support from newly established clubs in Elbasan, *Bashkimi* and *Vllaznia*, see AQSH, F.102D.57.f.1, dated Elbasan, September 1909.
66. Serving the "aspirations" of the larger population, it was largely the diaspora who identified the school as a tool of nationalism. See the series of commentaries praising the agenda by Luigj Gurakuqi, in the Boston *Toskërisht*-language newspaper *Dielli*, issues 40, 41, and 42, dated between December 31, 1909, and January 14, 1910.
67. One, calling itself the White Union (*Beyaz camiat*) lobbied through Ottoman newspapers for government pressure on Greek schools in the south to permit *Toskërisht* to be taught in them. The collaborative dynamic in the early postrevolution period is suggestive of an ongoing alliance between the new government and its constituents in the Balkans. For copies of letters sent to newspapers, see AQSH, F.32 D.55/1f.221–223, dated August 25, 1908.
68. HHStA, PA, XIV/15, Albanien XI/7, no. 10, Zambaur to Aehrenthal, dated Mitrovica, February 20, 1909, pp. 46–49.
69. It should be pointed out again that not all *Toskë* supported these schools. Indeed, a good number of those involved in administering the provinces, such as Görice/Korça's mayor, Mehmed Ali Pasha Delvina, actively lobbied Istanbul to crack down on the school. See HHStA, PA, XIV/24, Albanien Liasse XIV/4, no. 49b, Calice to Gołuchowski, dated Constantinople, November 16, 1898.

Conclusion

1. This was largely a product of deep regional differences among those suddenly expected to think in transregional, Albanian terms. For extensive files on efforts to reverse the League of Nation's (LON's) oversights, see, among others, LON, Class 11, R554, Dossier 1240, 1921.
2. For a compelling argument about the nature of power as it infiltrates the way in which historians write about the past, see Trouillot (1995: 70–107).
3. Far from being irrelevant, the innovations introduced by subdisciplines inspired by Foucault, such as subaltern studies and postcolonial history, are of obvious value once they are consulted as methodological guideposts rather than being reserved for "area studies."
4. For an example of the attention given to these agents of history at the turn of the century, see Brailsford (1906: 103, 135–136, 184–185).
5. British adventurer Edith Durham proved at times to be prone to tripping over clichés and cultural reductionism during her early visits to the Balkans. Initially unfamiliar with the diversity of the region around the frontier between Montenegro and the Ottoman empire ("Turkey" as she calls it), her "search for old Servia" led her for the first time to meet Albanians in Kosova, who, according to the novice writer, "are brave and intelligent, but they are wild, they know nothing, and they live like animals" (Durham 1904: 326). Her paternalistic tone of later years does not represent a change in her attitude

toward these idealized objects of Western consumption so much as channeling it into a more manipulative "collaborative" and "academic" mode of observation that continued to titillate British audiences, as well as serving as a valuable propaganda tool.

6. Journalists could not help themselves from giving what their editors and readers wanted: "In the shade of a grove of trees, by a spring, rested a dozen fierce looking Albanians, bristling with revolver butts and knife handles about their sashes. Horse thieves were they, but still gentle men, in this land of anarchy" (Sonnichsen 1909: 77).
7. For an accessible summary of the events in Salonika, see Mazower (2005: 242–262).
8. Despite Adanır's warnings about misinterpreting the activities of many of these groups as being nationalist in nature, much of the literature today still assumes that the violence in the Balkans was predicated on ethnonational and sectarian motivations (Adanır, 1982: 43–116).
9. See a report of Debreli Islam receiving "protection money" in the sum of 20 napoleons from a Bulgarian village. The Austrian official filing the report noted that the Geg Muslim was not conducting the kinds of "raids on Christian villages" often depicted in European newspapers at the time. Rather, Debreli Islam had been hired to defend the locals from the ravages of the "outsiders" who frequented the area. HHStA, PA, XXXVIII/391, no. 65, Kral to Gołuchowski, dated Manastir, July 9, 1901.
10. Gawrych (2006: 161–163) and Clayer (2006: 128–129) demonstrate how some scholars have overdetermined "threats of violence" as the central motivating force in late Ottoman politics in the western Balkans.
11. Again, I used this concept of historical engagement to erase the conventions of power to help us appreciate the productive nature of exchange between the "subordinate" and the "powerful," a concept and method of analysis inspired by Tsing (2005).
12. BBA, TFR.1 KV, 103/10242, Italian colonel report, dated August 29, 1905. Later, French and British observers remarked on similar solidarity between "ethnic and religious groups" among the Sandanski group circulating in the Serres region. PRO, FO, 371/534, O'Connor to Grey, dated Pera 1908.
13. The most valuable recent studies of these events are the published excerpts of Ahmed Niyazi Bey's correspondence and the personal diaries of key actors in Manastir at the time (Saraçoğlu 2006; Ragib 2007).
14. In fact, judging from the massive show of public support of the new Sultan Reşad as he toured Kosova in March of 1911, the incessant revolts in the region did not stop many thousands of *Gegë* and Slavs from demonstrating loyalty to the state. Mevlüt Çelebi (1999) offers details of this last desperate attempt by the sultan to maintain a firm hold over the rebellious provinces.

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